



Remember 202 Hodgepodge

*...the completely
disorganized thoughts of an idiotic
scientist...*

by Dr. Joey Bone

Booklet four

Preface

Some say that true creativity is an uncontrollable unconscious regurgitation, thrust into the awareness of the creator, but I can assure you that nothing akin to such an experience occurred in this rambling script, nor does this inky scratch qualify as any form of genuine art. And although, I'd like to tell you that this mare's nest of bird scrapings is true, or at least partially based on truth, unfortunately, it is nothing but utter invention... lies. Please realize that this is a poorly written, highly disorganized pen, frequently slaughtering the plot line, with too many distracting sidebars. It's also infected with too many redundancies, and so if you enjoy a steady tutorial of stimulating progress, this prattle may not be your huckleberry. Obviously, in your mind this book's worth will be assessed by your three pounds of gray mush. In my feeble old mind, I find it difficult to accurately assess anything I write; still, at times, creating these words has felt slightly cathartic. Once more dear reader, make no mistake, not one iota of this windy rigmarole, not a single phrase, is remotely fact-based. This book is only a poorly composed pack

of lies. From beginning to end, this chalky slate is fiction. If you recognize anything, which you think remotely corresponds to real life, it's purely coincidental! Nevertheless, providence can be fairly unbelievable. Where everything may be coincident and related, the problem could be that we may lack the requisite gray mush to perceive the massive numbers of inculcated relationships... subatomic particles moving subatomic particles..., etc. How else could anything happen? What else could anything be? Every thought banging around inside every brain is nothing but predetermined subatomic billiards. Once all those subatomic particles are in motion, what does free will have to do with it? If you do have the perseverance, to wade through this inky miasma, allow me to thank you, from the bottom of my psychopathic heart.



PISSING PSEUDO BLOOD

In the near infinite protoplasmic complexity of human biochemistry, as youth's elevated levels of testosterone begin to bind to their protein receptors,

strategically located within certain regions of the male limbic brain, he will likely become convinced that his ever thrilling sex drive and his enhanced physical prowess are the most important issues in all the universe, not global warming, not world healthcare, not endangered species. This situation is demonstrated by their appreciation of feminine beauty, and various athletic accomplishments. No where was that adolescent phenomenon more apparent, than within the dismal halls of my old military high school.

My roommate and I were on the wrestling team, but the toughest wrestler, who was also the most dangerous brawler in the school, was big Harwood P. Wells. Harwood literally worshipped violence, and he was good at it, and he lived on our hall.

Unfortunately, Harwood P. Wells had a well known and unpredictably ferocious temper, only to be overshadowed by his complete lack of humor. Of all the human neurological senses, perhaps it is the sense of humor is the one that will best get you through life's tough times. There's a quote from the movie *Caddyshack*, which may say it best. It goes something like...

It's easy to grin, when your ship comes in, and you've got the stock market beat. But the man worthwhile, is the man who can smile, when his shorts are too tight in the seat.

Brain Doyle-Murray, Harold Ramis, and Douglas Kenney

Harwood was mostly just skin, bone, and massive amounts of muscle, and his brain possessed a large scrunch of neurons, representing anger, ergo he automatically received ungodly amounts of respect. As a result, the other cadets consistently referred to him by his full name, including his middle initial. It was a peculiar form of deference, which I'd never heard of, nor have I since. That tradition began immediately after Harwood administered a severe beat-down to a huge belligerent opponent. The fight culminated with Harwood asking the question, "What's my name, asshole?"

"Harwood?"

"No! It's Harwood P. Wells! Now, say my full name

shit face!”

“Harwood P. Wells.”

“That’s better. From now on, call me Harwood P. Wells.”

Harwood P. Wells did so love that weird form of excessive regard, and while he may have been a little on the slow side and loved violence, he usually wasn’t a bad guy, only about ninety percent of the time. The other ten percent of the time, I’d just avoid him. As mentioned, he was the toughest guy in the school, a big country boy, with freakish amounts of strength, and fast and deadly as a rattlesnake with his fists. Nothing produces deference in an all male academy quite like prodigious amounts of raw reckless power. When over two hundred teenage males sleep, shower, shit, shave, and eat in the same building, fights are inevitable. They varied, from being highly skillful and courageous, to uncoordinated and cowardly, some impressive, some embarrassing. Many guys are afraid to fight, and when they do, they don’t know how to throw a punch. They punch, like a two year-old might try to pitch a baseball. Sometimes, I think that the art of self defense should be taught in elementary school and boxing a mandatory class. It might cut down on

the school bullying.

Lacking in truly great wrestling techniques, Harwood P. Wells still managed to become the state champ for the 181 pound class, based solely on his speed and massive brawn. Even his grip was legendary. His thick meaty forearms, were covered by huge numbers of large veins, which looked like a tangle of bluish snakes. During a wrestling match, Harwood P. Wells had made a wrestler cry-out in pain, simply by grabbing the opponent's shoulder, and digging in his fingers. His legendary grip was near bone-crushing, and was like getting caught by an iron vice. But even though he was strong as a loin, he wasn't satisfied. Harwood P. Wells desperately wanted even more strength, and during his free time, when not on the wrestling mat, he was in the weight room pumping iron in front of a large mirror, narcissistically admiring the results of his sweaty handy work. Harwood P. Wells never seemed to tire of gazing at himself, or for that matter, talking about his strength. The young man was something of a strength-obsessed narcissist.

One afternoon, my roommate, Rick Schneider, and I were packing our duffel bags to head home for a much needed Christmas break, when Harwood P.

Wells came striding into our room wanting to talk with Rick. He knew that Rick's dad was a Captain in the US Navy and a physician at the *Bethesda Naval Hospital*. In his thick country accent, Harwood P. Wells had come to ask Rick for a pharmaceutical favor.

“Rick, I know that your daddy is a Navy doctor, at that there Bethesda hospital. Ain't that right, Rick?”

“Yeah! So what are you getting at, Harwood P. Wells?” Rick responded.

“Well, Rick, I figure that maybe you can get me some of them there body-building steroids, since your daddy is around all them drugs, work'n at that hospital all the time. I don't want to use the kind that needs a needle, just some ah them steroid pills. You could just tell him that they're for you, and he'd probably will hand them right over to you, or maybe ya could just get em out of the hospital pharmacy, where he works, when your dad's not looking. Can you get me some of em, Rick? I'd be mighty beholden to ya, if'n you was to get me some. Seriously man! Can you get me some, Rick?” The ever dangerous Harwood P. Wells innocently asked, with the most beseeching expression he could manage, which made him seem like a bit of an idiot.

Several times, I had heard Harwood P. Wells talking with people about steroids. Stuff he'd read in magazines. However, this was the first time in my life that I'd ever heard anyone actually request them, and that appeal, together with Rick's quick positive reply, surprised me.

"Sure Harwood P. Wells, it's no problem... no sweat, old buddy. I'll bring them back with me, right after Christmas break. When it comes to drugs, my dad can get practically anything... it's easy! Or, like you said, I can just sneak into the hospital pharmacy, went no one's looking"

I was shocked to hear the ultraconservative and law-abiding Rick, saying that. Later, Rick became a pediatrician.

"No shit? Thanks! That's good news ole buddy. How much will those steroids cost me, Rick?"

"Nothing... It'll cost you nothing, pal! After all, I don't pay anything for them, so I'll just give em to you for free. My dad gets a lot of free samples from the drug reps, so it's no big deal. Besides, I might just steal them from the pharmacy." Rick generously replied. *Holy shit!*

I couldn't imagine that doctors dispensed anabolic

steroids, which back then most professional bodybuilders obtained illegally. In those days, news reports, concerning anabolic steroids, were always negative, as if steroids were akin to heroin; of course, so was marijuana back then. Nonetheless, after Harwood P. Wells left our dorm room, I asked Rick if he was going to procure the promised steroids for him.

“No way Joey, I can’t get any steroids. My dad would disown me, if I asked for some shit like that!. In fact, he’d probably kill me! Besides, I don’t think he can get them. He’s never talked about them. At least, he’s never mentioned anabolic steroids, when he’s talked about his work. I don’t think they’re generally used by doctors. If anything, they’d probably just prescribe straight testosterone. I’ve been wondering when Harwood P. Wells was going to get around to asking me for some steroids, since he knows that my dad is a doctor. I’ve heard him talking about steroids with the other guys on the wrestling team.”

“Then why did you tell Harwood P. Wells that you would get them for him? Lying to Harwood P. Wells is a pretty dicey deal, Rick!”

“I’ve been working on kind of a weird little plan. I’ll

tell you about it, after we get back from Christmas break, Joey. I've got to check on something, first." Rick answered. *What the fuck is Rick doing?*

Three weeks later, the holidays had sadly passed. When I got off the bus in downtown Weber City, close to the academy, old Lois was sitting in her car, waiting for me. Luckily, I had four hours to kill, before I needed to actually check-in at the main entrance hall of the academy, and Lois was not one to waste time, beating around the bush.

"Hi ya, sport. Figured you needed a few beers, before ya head back up the hill to that crazy old military school, and I feel like some sex, don't you, Joey?" She happily greeted me.

"Only when I'm breathing, Lois." I concurred.

Later, after she dropped me off near the dispensary, with my duffel bag in hand, I walked up the hill, toward the dismal school. Returning there was a depressing post-orgasmic experience. It dawned on me, that I wouldn't be seeing any females, except for occasionally the older happy alcoholic bar fly, for about the next six months, since we not allowed a spring break. So with that thought in mind, I stopped by the local Weber barbershop, and had my head

shaved. *Maybe Lois will like my new look.* Arriving at the school, I saw that the school commandant was just inside the main entrance, greeting the returning cadets. When he saw my shaved head, he immediately awarded me with a punishment tour. Each cadet was only allowed to wear a crewcut, or the standard military 'high and tight,' medium length hair on the top and shaved to the skin on either side of the head.

Back in my morose little dorm room, Rick and I were unpacking our duffel bags, and both of us were rather gloomy about having to be back at the dispiriting old ivy-covered building. That's when, I remembered Rick's promise to Harwood P. Wells, concerning the steroids, which Rick was supposed to have brought-back from Christmas break.

"What about those steroids for Harwood P. Wells, Rick? Did you bring him some?" I asked.

"I got Harwood P. Wells something better, than steroids, a different kind of drug! But don't you dare tell him, Joey. It's called pyridium or phenazopyridine." Rick said, while pulling the brown glass pill bottle out of his olive green duffel bag, and handed it over to me. Opening the bottle, I inspected the pills. Drugs often came in dark brown glass

bottles, back then. Now the world makes nearly everything out of near indestructible plastic. If you doubt this, just ask the oceans's wild life. {Perhaps those huge floating plastic islands in the Pacific Ocean could be harvested and turned into more permanent structures in various construction projects, plastic: lumber, beams, supports, fasteners, etc.}

“What does pyridium do in the body, Rick? These pills are huge.”

“They're used to treat the pain due to bladder infections... kind of a bladder numbing agent. Generally, women take them, since women get more bladder infections, than men. But the best thing about those big pills is that they turn your urine reddish-orange, so when you pee, it looks like you've got blood in your urine. That fact, along with what I have to tell Harwood P. Wells, make him reconsider ever taking any steroids.” Rick proudly proclaimed. “When I get done with him, he'll just be happy to be alive. It'll be a little attitude adjustment.”

“Wow! You know Rick, scaring the shit out of Harwood P. Wells, is kind of treacherous. You know he'll probably beat the crap out of you, if he figures out that you've played a trick like that on him. You

sure you want to do this, Rick? He's got zero sense of humor. That idea could really go bad for you, man! You could end-up dead or crippled for life." I warned, purposely exaggerating the possible outcome, albeit not by much.

"What else is there to do in this gloomy old school? I gotta do something to brake the boredom, Joey." Rick responded.

"How about, avoid getting pulverized, by Harwood P. Wells? He's gonna kick your ass!" I again warned.

Two hours before dinner, with his duffel bag slung over his massive right shoulder, the late Harwood P. Wells went striding passed our door, heading for his dorm room. *I can't believe Rick is going to mess-with the notorious Harwood P. Wells.* Right after unpacking and stowing his gear, Harwood came directly to our room, looking for Rick, and the promised magical anabolic steroids. Absent excessive drooling, he looked like a starving man searching for a six course meal. He obviously hadn't forgotten Rick's solemn pharmaceutical promise, and straight-away came searching for his drugs. Without so much as saying, 'hello,' Harwood P. Wells got straight to the point.

"You got dem steroids for me, Rick? Huh?" He

demanded in a somewhat rude fashion, and looking like a mountain made of muscle, bone, and excessive amounts poorly controlled adolescent meanness.

“Yup! I sure do. They’re right here Harwood P. Wells. *This is like poking a hungry tiger in the eye with a stick.* I’ve put them in this bottle for you. It doesn’t have a label on it, because steroids don’t go through a normal pharmacy, like the other drugs do. They were used on the recovering Jews and POWs in the Nazi prison camps, to build-up their emancipated bodies. If the school should ever find out about these, we sure as hell don’t want them to know what they are, or where you got them from, so hide them, where they can’t be found. And whatever you do, don’t tell anyone you have them! If the school finds these, just say you found them on the ground over by the infirmary. When you start packing-on all that muscle, just tell people that you’re working-out twice as hard, and eating more. And, try not to brag too much about all those new muscles. That will attracted unwelcome attention.” Rick foolishly, but bravely lectured.

“Ya ain’t gotta worry about me say’n nothing, Rick. I won’t say shit to nobody, and I’ll hide these here pills real good! If’n someone finds them, I’ll remember to

say I found them on the ground in the grass by the infirmary, and I won't say jack shit about my muscles. So, stop your worry'n!" Harwood P. Wells proclaimed, while grinning like a mindless big toothed jacklalatren.

"These were free samples, that my dad got from some shady pharmaceutical salesman. Now listen, Harwood P. Wells. I asked my dad about possible side effects. He said that for most people, the steroids are perfectly safe, but he also said there can be some deadly serious side effects, but they're for just a few unfortunate people. He thinks I'm gonna be taking them, so he really lectured me about the possible side effects. And, I got to admit, one side effect in particular is seriously scary." Rick gravely advised. *Here comes the lie!*

Rick promptly handed him the brown bottle, filled with the large round red tablets. Harwood P. Wells' face lit-up light a Roman candle, obviously highly pleased, with Rick having lived-up to his promise. The idea of having massive muscles clearly excited Harwood P. Wells. *Too bad they haven't made steroids for brains.*

"What's that bad side effect you talk'n about, Rick? What'd your daddy tell you about these here big red

steroid pills?” Harwood P. Wells frowned and asked.

“Well, Harwood P. Wells, in just a very few rare cases, steroids have been known to be extremely dangerous, producing almost immediate irreversible kidney damaged, and massive toxic blood chemistry, soon followed by brain death. If that’s gonna happen, the first sign is that the unlucky person starts peeing blood, so the urine appears kind of reddish-orange, then after a while, the person starts peeing pure blood. Once this horrible process starts, there’s nothing that can be done to save the person. Once they see that they have blood in their urine, that’s it! They’re gonna die! There’s no hope, and they die, within twenty-four to thirty-six hours! Right before they died, they’re in a hold bunch of mind bending pain, and have to be put on morphine, but even the morphine barely helps with the pain. They die screaming in agony; and right before death, they go completely insane. It’s all pretty quick. Dad said that not even a hospital full of doctors can save them, once the bleeding begins, but that very rarely happens, it’s only one in every fifty-thousand users.” Rick issued this fallacious warning with a tremendous amount of solemnity. *My God! Rick’s lost his fucking mind. Harwood P. Wells will kill him. My*

roommate was really going out on a rotten limb, considering how angry Harwood P. Wells could become, and how strong and dangerous he was. Harwood was a regular pit-bull when angered, yet some people will do almost anything to assuage the boredom monster, and end life's oppressive tedium.

“Fucking-A... that sounds pretty bad, but these here steroids ain't gonna hurt this tough country boy, Rick! One in fifty thousand, ain't that bad! I'm gonna be bigger than shit, man... muscles on top of muscles, just like dem famous bodybuilders, in those magazines! I might just have to move-up two full weight classes in wrestling. I might even take the nationals. Imagine me as a national wrestling champ! Anyhow, how do I take these pills, man... how many do I take and how often?” Harwood P. Wells confidentially asked.

“Once a day, you just swallow two of those, and before you know it, people won't recognize you, because of the size of your muscles. You'll look like *The Incredible Hulk*.” Rick proclaimed.

Without further ado, Harwood P. Wells went over to our room-sink, turned on the tap, opened the pill bottle, shook-out two big red tablets into his palm, popped them in his mouth, stuck his thin hard lips

into the stream of cold water, and fearlessly slurped the medicine down.

“Thanks Rick! I owe you big time, ole buddy!” Harwood P. Wells loudly spoke, drawing his sleeve across his mouth to catch the drips.

Rick's gonna get a major ass-whipping, when Harwood finds out the truth. Every muscle in Harwood P. Well's boney face flexed and molded into an intense macabre bulldog-like smile, as he headed-out of the room, pills in hand. His smile was bared teeth with folded-under lips, pulled-up tight at the corners, with flared nostrils. *Holy shit, Harwood P. Wells is going to beat the crap out of Rick!* In the two hours before dinner, Harwood P. Wells still hadn't appeared to have peed, since he seemed to have relatively normal behavior. After dinner and before study hall, I covertly shadowed Harwood P. Wells, but he never used the bathroom. Although there were a couple of times, where he could have peed, and I wouldn't have known; nevertheless, he showed no apparent surprise, so I figured he hadn't emptied his bladder yet, or perhaps the pills hadn't yet done their job, in turning his urine red. Perhaps, Harwood had a gallon sized bladder.

Even though we had just come back from the

holidays and didn't have any homework, we were nonetheless ordered to go to study hall for one hour. So, not being allowed to talk, all we could do is read to pass the time. For the entire hour, Harwood P. Wells still never got-up to urinate. I began to wonder if Harwood P. Wells was an alien, who never needed to pee. The suspense of the dangerous situation had definitely helped to reduce the inevitable post-holiday depression.

Just before lights out that evening, Harwood at last hurriedly ambled past our glass-paned dorm room door, headed for the hall's community bathroom. Rick and I walked to our door and poked-out our heads, as Harwood entered the bathroom. The two of us continued to wait there, heads barely sticking-out our dorm room door, gazing down the hallway, just waiting to get a look at Harwood P. Well's face, when he emerged from the bathroom. Yet, the bathroom door didn't open for the longest time. *Maybe, Harwood is doing a number two.* The reason Harwood took so long to come out of the bathroom was that he was just standing in front of the urinal paralyzed by fear, having just finished peeing red into the white porcelain trough, thinking that Rick's grave warning had just come true, and he was going

to die!

Nothing makes a person consider the value of their life, quite like impending death.

Don't Interrupt The White Noise by Bill R.

Mosley

After a lengthy delay, Harwood P. Wells finally stepped out the bathroom door. He looked lightyears beyond shocked, as if he'd been hit by a bolt of lightning. The terrified young man was starkly pale, staring hard at the floor, eyes wide open, eyebrows raised, and his mouth open and slack jawed. At first, his fingers were closed into tight fists, then they opened, and his fingers began to shake and nervously drum the air. Paradoxically, the toughest man in the school was obviously suffering with an acute case of panic. *Rick's pill joke is too much for Harwood to handle. This is hilarious!* Correspondingly, the humorous irony was too much. It's hard to have irony without paradox. The tragic shock value of Rick's sadistic little trick was too good to be true, especially for my immoral adolescent mind, ergo the humor was overwhelming!

Rick and I struggled to keep from busting out laughing. To prevent Harwood from seeing us, we leaned back into our room and quietly closed the door. If you're a decent person reading about this mindless teenage practical joke, you may see it, as I do now, that it was not funny at all. However, to two uncultured teenage pranksters, the situation was hilarious. That moment was beyond the pentacle of adolescent joy; it was like my mother had reacted to the snake, but on steroids (foolish pun intended).

The terrified thunder-struck Harwood P. Wells slowly came down the hall, and began to pass our door, so Rick and I tried to look busy, in case he looked through the two large window panes in our room door, which guaranteed that the cadets never had any privacy. As the mighty Harwood P. Wells passed our room, he turned his head and forlornly gazed in at us. *Holy shit! He looks so scared!* Harwood P. Wells looked more pitiful, than someone walking the long green mile, on the way to the electric chair. Harwood looked utterly terrified, with even the outer corners of his eyes turned down. He gave us a truly mournful gaze. Harwood P. Wells was destroyed, and about to cry, with his lower lip starting to noticeably tremble.

Then indeed, tears began to stream down his pale hard chiseled face! *Actual tears! This is too good to be true!* Harwood was crying like a baby, and that fact was hilarious, too much to be contained. The suppressed laughter in my chest was building like a volcano, simultaneously the cry of laughter exploded from both Rick and me, and once it was unleashed there was no stopping it! The sudden emotional explosion felt great, and once unleashed it just continued to grow, and the laughter became unstoppable! No doubt, the unquenchable choking howling laughter was plainly owing to the depression produced by the return to the miserable academy, but it was also being fueled by Harwood's pending violent reaction. The fear of Harwood's responses fueled the laughter.

While Harwood P. Wells was somewhat cognitive slow, he certainly wasn't slow enough for Rick and I to escape his fury. With our outpouring of laughter, the muscular menace fully realized that some kind of a joke had been played on him, which had something to do with the large red pills and his peeing red, which he yet believed was actual blood. He thought Rick had given him some sort of poison and that I had gone along with said poisoning. The terror-

stricken Harwood P. Wells instantly transformed from a pitiful whimpering baby, into an explosive raging bull. *Holy shit! Harwood is so pissed!* Harwood P. Wells violently flung open our dorm room door, which crashed into the wall, ergo one of its' two glass panes shattered, and the pieces fell to the floor. Because of our laughter, and the sound of breaking glass, several cadets quickly appeared in the hallway behind Harwood P.Wells, and were looking into our room, wondering what was happening.

Suddenly, Harold P. Wells charged into our room, like an insane bull. He fully believed that he'd been intentionally poisoned, and we were laughing at his medical misfortune, laughing at the blood in his urine! *He wants to know what it was that Rick gave him.* He probably figured that his kidneys had been destroyed. The situation was so humorous, and my laughter so intense, I was crying, unable to speak, and gasping for air.

“What the fuck kinda poison are dem God damn fucking red pills you gave me, Rick? What the hell have you done to me, you fucking asshole? I've got blood in my piss, Rick! You're gonna tell me about dem pills, right now, buddy! What have you done to me, Rick? And, you knew about this, Joey! Fuck you

both! Am I gonna die?” Harwood bellowed loud enough that the entire dormitory had to have heard. *Oh no, he’s mad at me, too! This real bad!* It was impossible to stop laughing, and so I could say nothing to protect myself.

Because we were already laughing uncontrollably, the now fully flushed apoplectic Harwood P. Wells seemed even funnier, so there was no stopping our laughter, even though, Rick and I sensed what was coming! The comedy of Harwood’s face going from terror to supreme anger made Rick and me unable to control our laughter. In fact, we were laughing so hard, that we were both choking for air and in danger of passing-out. Because we were laughing is probably the only reason the cadets didn’t take what was happening too seriously, and began to turn to leave.

Both Rick and I were unable to explain to Harwood P. Wells about the harmless pills. And, the more Harwood demanded to know, the funnier the situation seemed. Harwood P. Wells continued to assume that we were sadistically laughing about the physical damage the pills had inflicted on his kidneys, and that fact seemed to make the situation all the more hilarious. *I can’t breathe.*

“You hear me Rick... I said what the fuck did you give me? What have you done to me? I’m pissing blood and you two are laughing! God damn, you two! You both done fucked me up, with those damn big red pills! You boys are get’n one hell of an ass whooping!” Harwood P. Wells loudly threatened. *God, does he want to hurt us!*

With an ugly snarl, the flushed crimson-faced blond wrestler bared his big squarish white teeth, while his ultra small blue eyes burned in their sockets. All these things made the situation more comical, so there was no stopping our laughter. Foolishly, I wasn’t too worried for myself, since I had wrongly assumed that while Harwood was mad at me, his real target was Rick, because he’s the one, who actually obtained and had given him the pills. Nevertheless, Harwood P. Wells could see that I was plainly enjoying the prank, and since I was standing closer to him, than was Rick, I became Harwood’s first target. The 181 pound wrestler threw a lightning-fast devastating right uppercut, which I barely realized was coming, only a fraction of a second, before it impacted with the underside of my chin.

The sledgehammer fist hit like a cannon blast, bringing me up off the ground, launching me up and

over backwards. My back slid across my study desk, and I came down on the other side, head first, and upside-down, in the seat of a gray painted wooden chair. I was stunned, but for only a second or two; just enough time for Harwood P. Wells to come around the table. Since I was still upside-down, he continued to ridiculously punch me in the ribs and the back of my thighs. The pain of the half dozen or so punches though highly significant, still couldn't suppress the laughter. There's nothing quite as life affirming, as surviving a bad beating. Though the short-term beating was nothing short of vicious, and I'd been briefly stunned by the uppercut, recalling Harwood's mournful facial expression made me continue my laughing. The pain of the pounding actually seemed to fuel the laughter. *This is totally nuts!* The resultant bruises lasted for weeks.

Fortunately for me, Harwood P. Wells suddenly spun and hit Rick with a pile-driving straight right, square in the snot-locker, causing the back of Rick's head to violently snap-back and bounce off the over painted grey steel bed frame, behind him. Unconscious, Rick's heels shot forward on the floor, as his back slid down the steel frame, until his butt smacked the hardwood floor. With his back and head propped-up

on the bed, a small trickle of blood was flowing-out from Rick's right nostril. As I sat-up in the chair, so I could continue to witness things upside-up, Rick regained consciousness. For a fraction of a second, right before Rick's eyes opened, once again I saw fear pass across Harwood's face; perhaps, for a moment he'd thought he'd killed Rick. Harwood had plainly looked relieved, when Rick regained consciousness. The next day, Rick would have two phenomenally monstrous black eyes, which he'd tell the staff was owing to his walking into the bathroom door, when he sleepily got-up in the middle of the night to pee.

After yet another slightly attenuated verbal demand for an explanation about the nature of the big red pills, Rick was able to tell him what he'd done, and that the pills were completely harmless, and the red color was just the color of the medicine in his urine, not actual blood. Innocent as I was, Harwood P. Wells still never offered me an apology for the undeserved beating, since he realized how much I enjoyed terrifying him. The pain in the back of my legs and ribs hurt for two weeks. Filled with throbbing pain, I was smart enough not to ask Harwood P. Wells for that apology. Once the laughter and the beatings had finally ended, and the

onlooking cadets in the hall went back to their rooms. There was never any concern about their saying anything to the school staff.

After Harwood left our room, Rick and I began to talk about what had happened, and so once more, we began laugh, even after the lights were out. It was hard to sleep that night, since every time I moved, my ribs and legs hurt. Oddly, after the blow to my chin, my jaw and teeth were fine. At least for a brief while, Rick and I had escaped the morbid gloom, produced by the return to the all male military academy. Thanks to Rick and the big red pills, I'd had one of the richest laughs of my life, and that's saying something. As obvious as it may seem, life doesn't get much better than being filled with sheer happiness, just as long as the right things generate it, and as odd as it may seem, all three of us benefited from that practical joke: Harwood, Rick, and I.

Neither the pill-prank, nor our subsequent beating, indelibly affected our friendships. Friendship was all you had in military school, to deal with your enemies, and with the countless unreasonable rules and regulations. Since the three of us were on the wrestling team, the conflict was quickly forgotten. Never did I again heard of Harwood P. Wells asking

for steroids. That was my first real experience with the narcissistic world of steroids. After watching how fearful Harwood looked, coming out of the bathroom, I realized that nothing quite gets one's attention quite like the threat of imminent death. With extreme old age, very small controlled doses of roids (short for steroids) may be a beneficial thing, but something tells me that the larger amounts, which bodybuilders and competitive sports people often use, are extremely dangerous. Almost every person I know, who's done steroids for performance enhancement now suffers with hypertension (high blood pressure), or some type of arrhythmia, or some other adverse cardiac issue. In fact, one of the young bodybuilders in the gym, where I workout, recently received a heart transplant. These weightlifters and bodybuilders are guys, I've known for years, and who are much younger than I.

Now, the world of sports has been completely transformed by performance enhancing steroids, etc. I would venture to say that it's likely that the vast majority, perchance more than ninety-eight percent, of all the world records garnered in the last thirty years are owing to the aerobic and anaerobic benefits of anabolic steroids, as well as other illegal

performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs). Quite frankly, there is now no efficacious way to sort out, which sports records are natural and which are augmented by drugs. At this point, too much water has passed under the bridge. I've often contemplated, that if almost all the records are indeed owing to illegal performance enhancers, and somehow the future use of steroids and other IPEDS could somehow be successfully banned, then there'd be a fairly good chance, that there'd be no new world records.

Perhaps, through witness testimony, a few past and present recorder holders could be 'exposed,' but certainly most will not be uncovered. The magnitude of this jumbled-up statistical miasma is impossible to sort-out. Natural human biochemistry has become inextricably inculcated with the world of exogenous chemicals. Of all the drugs, which are used to enhance athletic performance, the most dangerous of them are most likely the addicting stimulants (methamphetamine, adderall, cocaine, etc.), which are hard on the brain, liver, pancreas, and kidneys, and often produce psychotic behavior, stress the blood vessel walls, and so can be stroke-inducing. If you think about it, although legal, even a cup of coffee is technically a performance enhancing drug.

The professional sports, that I knew as a child, are now forever gone. In those days, there were three primary contributing variables to success in sports: genetics, practice, and something people called, 'heart.' Now the athletes are connoisseurs of fine molecules. Some use speed, cocaine, roids, growth hormone, pain killers, etc. Though many are not so concerned with enjoying a drug high, as enjoying the augmented physiology: running faster and/or further, throwing harder and further, swimming further and faster, lifting heavier weights, reducing body fat, increasing muscle mass, reducing recovery and healing times, etc. Many of the drugs, not only increase endurance and strength, but work to improve sleep, as well as the user's performance longevity, since more and more records are being 'broken,' by older athletes. Dara Torres was the age-related headline at the 2008 games in Beijing. She won three silver medals at the age of 41! Whether or not Ms. Torres used performance enhancing drugs, I have no idea. She still has a rather feminine shape, unlike some olympic female swimmers, with huge masculine-like back and shoulder muscles (cannonball delts {deltoid muscles/shoulder muscles}). While I'm indeed impressed by physical prowess, I must sadly admit I find such muscularity

in a woman to be less than sexually appealing, though it likely appeals to the lipstick lesbian crowd. This is not to say that feminine beauty should matter to the female athletes, but it does to me.

Besides producing negative physiological effects, in some people, steroids appear to produce overly aggressive personalities. Roids may augment violent actions; depending on the person's ability to control their aggressive groups of neurons, the results can be considerable, if not criminal. Another popular performance enhancer is growth hormone (not a steroid but a protein hormone), which looks like it may actually hold the key to holding back, or even reversing, some of the effects of old age.

Unfortunately, if too much is taken, there can be negative side effects: organ growth, as well as bone growth of the jaw and brow. In low doses, growth hormone appears safe and effective, producing: better sleep, better skin, increased strength, faster reaction times, and reduced body fat.

“One man practicing sportsmanship is far better than a hundred teaching it.”

Knute Rockne

How often during professional sports do you see an example of sportsmanship? Occasionally, I think I've seen a football player reduce the force of a hit, so as not to induce unnecessary injury in an opponent. On the other hand, as of late, I have seen too many players doing just the opposite. Some unsportsmanlike conduct might well be owing to the neurophysiological effects of steroids. 'Roid rage' is a real phenomenon. Roids have become fairly popular amongst certain of the masculine lesbians. This poses an interesting type of risk. Males grow-up dealing with their own naturally high levels (compared to females) of testosterone, so through the years, they learn how to control their testosterone-reinforced aggression. However, a mature female, who has not learned to control high testosterone-mediated aggression, and suddenly starts to use roids (which closely mimic testosterone), may commit violent acts, which she normally would never have considered doing. This makes me wonder, if roids have ever been used as a criminal defense. Moreover, in the various gyms where I've workout, there seems to be more and more law-enforcement people using steroids, and this has caused me to wonder if steroids may have contributed to some police being overly

aggressive.

[http://archpsyc.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?
articleid=496600](http://archpsyc.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=496600)

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abs/10.1080/09585189308408215?
journalCode=rjfp19](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585189308408215?journalCode=rjfp19)

Certainly, professional sports wouldn't be as exciting without steroids, especially the NFL, soccer, rugby, swimming, powerlifting, track and field, baseball, basketball, etc. The strength, speed, endurance, and hitting power would not be as nearly great, without that illegal man-made 'juice,' but conceivably the injuries wouldn't be as severe, either. All those football players getting problematic concussions seem to have increased in the last thirty years, which appear to correlate with memory loss, early onset senility, loss of coordination and balance, etc. Professional sports teams now keep a plethora of orthopedic surgeons and physical therapists in business. While the hitting power has tremendously increased, the athlete's ability to withstand the concomitant injuries, has but marginally increased.

The injuries which appear to have increased the most are: ACL injuries, 'dead leg,' AC joint injuries, meniscus injuries, hip pointer injuries, hamstring tears and strain, and shoulder dislocations. Steroids only slightly increase knee strength (slightly thicker tendons and ligaments), and they do nothing to better protect the brain. The jiggly brain and its fragile blood vessels don't toughen-up with steroid use.

Still, in many ways, a better built steroid-using players can often absorb harder hits in certain other parts of their body (back, abdomen, thighs, shoulders, arms), and the player may also recover from certain injuries faster. Yet as previously stated, the players don't tend to completely recover from traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, nor do they always fully recover from certain of the more devastating knee injuries. Knee replacements keep improving, but no artificial knee performs nearly as well as the real thing. In some respects, a lower leg prosthetic enables some people to run better, than does an artificial knee.

As a regular viewer of sports, I can say that I really don't care if the players are juicing. Do you care? But then again, just how important are sports? Who

watches sports for moral reasons, or to witness sportsmanship? Nevertheless, in my old age, I do like to see sportsmanship, but unfortunately, I largely watch sports for the excitement of the outstanding performance, and yes, somewhat for the gratuitous violence, ergo I watch a fair amount of *MMA* (mixed martial arts). My favorite sports commentator is Joe Rogan. No doubt, I've a piece of over active socially inappropriate gray matter. Still, I'd like to believe that injured athletes make a full recovery, but the truth is they sometimes don't! I understand those people, who feel that sports are like art forms, which have been corrupted by performance enhancing drugs, but I don't care. Perhaps sports should be viewed as art on roids. Why not? It's quite likely, that the players know the risks they run, and are entitled to run them, if they so choose; after all, it is their bodies and minds. Look at Arnold Schwarzenegger's illustrious career. All this makes one wonder, what percentage of athletes participate in sports, because they just love the sport, instead of the corresponding money and fame, which currently mandates their abuse of performance enhances drugs.

“Someone who doesn't make the (Olympic) team

might weep and collapse. In my day, no one fell on the track and cried like a baby. We lost gracefully. And when someone won, he didn't act like he'd just become king of the world, either. Athletes in my day were simply humble in our victory.

I believe we were more mature then... Maybe it's because the media puts so much pressure on athletes; maybe it's also the money. In my day we competed for the love of the sport... In my day we patted the guy who beat us on the back, wished him well, and that was it."

Devil at My Heels: A Heroic Olympian's Astonishing Story of Survival as a Japanese POW in World War II
by Louis Zamperini

Perchance, in a perfect world there would be no steroids, but in this solidly imperfect world, if you're a professional athlete, you'd probably be considered crazy not to use performance enhancing drugs, since nearly all your highly competitive adversaries are using them, hitting and tackling you harder, out playing you, out running, out throwing, out rowing, out pedaling, out jumping, out swimming, etc. Without steroids, and other performance enhancing drugs your endurance is likely to be inferior, and

your tendon, cartilage, ligament, bone, and muscle strength is comparatively less. The player who competes, without using 'the juice' is just an accident waiting to happen... a lamb being lead to the slaughter, amongst hungry lions.

Steroids are probably here to stay, so let's stop hassling people about using them... let's stop throwing them to the media wolves... let's stop stripping them of their medals and maybe giving them to other people, who probably also were using the juice, but timed their usage better, so they didn't get caught. Perhaps, more research dollars should go into such things as: how those drugs can be more safely used, better helmets, better knee surgeries, and a cure for Alzheimers. Research on that former variable is currently being independently conducted by the users, employing the crude trial and error method; the error part is the problem.

Way back in 1967, I worked as a workout instructor at a high-end health club. It was one of those places where people would go to hook-up. Still, many of the *NFL's Washington Red Dogs* worked-out there. Every single one of the players, whom I was fortunate enough to meet, used roids, as well as amphetamines, and that was nearly fifty years ago. Walking through

the locker room, I'd frequently see the players, openly taking said pills, and/or injecting themselves. Then, the favorite steroid was dianabol (metandienone). It was developed in 1955 by CIBA. It's now hardly used, since better and safer steroids are available. Most of the football players were doing more than one variety of roid. They called that process, 'stacking.' One guy in particular, used quite a large variety of steroids, four to six different steroids at a time, and so he was nicknamed, 'roid-daddy.' I'd later learn, that he died from a stroke at age fifty-one. An old review article came out in 1984, and may still be one of the best.

Amer J Sports Med, Nov-Dec 1984: 12(6):469-84.

In addition, when I'd walk through the locker-room, I'd see lot of the *Washington Red Dogs* self-injecting prednisone into their overworked inflamed joints, usually in their knees, but other joints as well, e.g., elbows, wrists, fingers, ankles, hips, etc. They used prednisone, trying to reduce their pain from inflammation, but in the process, they often

sacrificed some amount of bone, cartilage, as well as ligament and tendon strength. The degrading effects of that injection were not fully understood, back then, and so it was often over used. If used in limited amounts, prednisone can be extremely beneficial. Before starting their workout, they'd down some type of amphetamines: bennies, ampes, cartwheels, dexies, footballs, black mollies, etc. Cocaine was not used in sports too often, then. The roids and the stimulants were collectively referred to as, 'gym candy.' If someone indulged, they were said to have a 'sweet tooth.' These guys often had to take downers (barbiturates or benzodiazepines) to get to sleep at night, ergo I suspect that many of them were multi-drug addicts.

Stimulant addiction is still just as dangerous, as it always has been. There's no free lunch when it comes to jacking-up or slowing down your brain. In fact, the pharmaceutical companies are now making an even more addicting stimulant, the notorious adderall, supposed treatment for *ADHD*. That drug contains two stimulants, 75% dextroamphetamine and 25% levoamphetamine, two enantiomers (non-superposable mirror image molecules). The drug was once banded in Canada, due to associated deaths. It's

probably more addicting than is crack! Mysteriously, an 'independent panel' was able to overturn the Canadian ban on the drug. It was initially banned due to twenty associated deaths. Most likely *Scrooge and Shire Pharmaceuticals* is glad they did. What's a few dead people, when it comes to being able to addict so many patients? Addicts represent a near never ending stream of income! And, not just for the drug companies, but for the funeral homes, as well! Most of the college students, who I now know, currently use the drug to get through school. They talk about using the drug, as if it's no big deal! Wait till they can't get their Rx, then it's time to buy illegal street drugs, probably impure crystal meth! If the meth is smoked it intense but last only about two hours, then it's time to buy some more. A fair portion of meth addicts began their addiction as adderall addicts.

No doubt there were those highly moral people, who were happy that Lance Armstrong was stripped of his medals, just as life had cruelly stripped him of part of his genitalia. But in reality, Lance's perception of his own successes is all that matters; how his gray matter perceives of himself. Still, there is the financial matter of all those lost endorsements, and the

massive egos of the other competitors, who lost those races to him, and don't think for a second, that many of them weren't using roids.

I'm in a biker gang. We deal in drugs. Our chapter president is Lance Armstrong.

Jarod Kintz (Creator of creative quotes.)

Because of the markedly increased athletic use of steroids, now a circus of loudly publishing investigators and troupes of hungry litigators are on a never-ending nerve-racking witch hunt, ready to confiscate someone's sports title, medals, records, or their lucrative advertising contracts. The public is constantly bombarded and entertained, by the news of the latest unfortunate athlete, who has been exposed. Honestly, who cares if some guy used steroids? Who cares if he or she smoke weed?

Michael Phelps won 22 Olympic Medals, 18 of those were gold. He also won 33 World Championship Medals, and over his swimming career, he set 39 world records! He is likely the greatest athlete, who has ever lived. Then, Michael got caught smoking pot, and there went tons of profitable endorsements,

but they couldn't take his medals and records for using weed! What's the lesson to be gleaned? The answer is obvious... weed can turn you into a tremendous athlete. Only kidding... But in all seriousness, what does that say about how safe marijuana is, if the world's greatest athlete occasionally hits a joint? Sometimes I wonder how brilliant many of the world's most popular musicians would have been without their dugs of choice.

How many professional athletes participate in their sport for the beauty and joy of the sport itself? I'm sure some do. Have you ever considered that one day, steroid-use will be considered acceptable, and no longer something to be tested for, and then, if that ever happens, there will be the problem of all those medals, which had been rescinded, because the person was caught using some performance enhancing drug? Will their medals be returned? Why are people so hell bent on looking for such judgement?

Maybe only fools and geniuses, who go looking for tornados on sunny days.

Adrian W. Morsley

Now, pro sports are all about immense salaries and even bigger endorsements; if sports weren't about money, the athletes might not be as prone to using all those high-powered drugs, and there wouldn't be the need for the associated agents, and lawyers! Athletes, using only their physical prowess, and their favorite drugs, now vie for incomes rivaling the *Great Gatsby*. The fans and TV spectators, should realize in an indirect manner they support all the performance enhancement insanity, since they purchase the advertised products.

<http://mashable.com/2014/02/01/the-7-types-of-super-bowl-ad/#Rulm2PSmMmqY>

My youthful friendships in military school, though temporary, tended to be far stronger than those made in my later years. Maybe that means I never grew-up. A true friend believes friendship to be a sacred bond, and friends sincerely enjoy each other's company. Friends don't talk about each other, behind their backs, so if you receive irrefutable evidence that your friend is bad-mouthing you, drop them like a hot potato, for indeed they're not really your friend.

Now, most the adults I know are so swamped with their work and so busy with their families, I hardly ever see them. Friendships usually require time to grow, but with life as it is today, there seems to be less available time, or possibly it's just my misperception. Thank goodness you don't need steroids to make friends.

OBJ



THE GIGOLO'S HEAD

One summer semester, while attending *Alexandria County Community College*, to make ends meet, I worked part-time as a pool lifeguard and workout trainer, at the nearby *Rob Paul's Plaza Health Club*, situated on Wakefield Road, adjacent to the beltway, just west of Washington, DC, and north of Springfield, in Annandale, VA. Workout instructors are now known as 'personal fitness instructors.' The required course work, for the title of PFI, is extremely minimal, but it allows colleges and universities to make a bit more money, charging students for course work and texts; moreover, the state makes money off the resultant certificate, and associated licensing fees, and then there are the costly 'continuing educational courses,' from which the state makes even more money, by licensing the instructors of the continuing ed classes. Today, when it comes to education, it seems that money is all that really matters... no more trying to actually inspire students, no more pushing back the frontiers of darkness, no more love of teaching and learning, etc. Remember that in the world of education, the United States is only somewhere around fifteenth to

eighteenth, depending on which analysis you read. Still, our military is the most effective killing machine ever made in the history of the world, and we jail more of our citizens than any other country on earth, but our educational system and medical care suck, especially considering our massive economy.

There was never a dull moment at *Rob Paul's Plaza Health Club*. As mentioned, a fair percentage of the *NFL's Washington Red Dogs* worked out there, and virtually all of them abused steroids and amphetamines, but as stated, none which I knew, used cocaine. Cocaine was certainly around then, but just didn't get used in athletics, too often. The reason was simple... it had too much of a negative reputation. Amphetamines were thought of as being medicine, after all American and British fighter and bomber pilots took them during the war. To the best of my meager knowledge, although cocaine was then being used recreationally, it hadn't yet fully insinuated itself into the professional sports scene. Cocaine in the *NFL* didn't seem to really get seriously started until the 1980s. Now, the use of steroids, and the use of addictive stimulant drugs in pro sports have become so common, that supposedly drug

rehabilitation agreements are often an integral part of many of the professional athletic contracts! It's as if the legal system is recognizing and condoning drugs as being necessary to play pro sports. Perhaps, the gaming commission is hinting that it's okay to use them. After all, enhanced performance means a better show, which translated into big bucks.

Rob Paul's club had the usual spectrum of clientele; folks trying to: look buff, toughen-up, get healthy, live longer, train for some athletic event or contest, find someone for true love, ward-off boredom, make a friend, or most often to unambiguously make a one-night hook-up. And with regard to the latter, the late night customers at the club looked like a regular metropolitan meat market, along with its share of high class gigolos and strikingly beautiful hookers, generally clad in the revealing types of skimpy tight fitting work-out attire. Consequently, I always tried to get assigned to work the late shift. Although the pay was abysmal, and only fifty cents above minimum wage, I was young and never tired of the provocative feminine users.

Tommy was probably the most successful gigolo at *Rob Paul's*, a tall lean muscular Latin-looking man,

who weirdly claimed he was of Irish ancestry, when nothing about him seemed Irish. Tommy was in his late thirties. He'd made it into the top twenty of the Virginia State body building competition. Everyone seemed to like the guy, at least casually. He gave the impression that he really loved people, especially the rich older gals, though I think the impression was contrived. Married or single, Tommy refused to discriminate.

He seemed to enjoy showing me the lavish gifts, which his lady customers had bestowed upon him: watches, clothes, shoes, sunglasses, jewelry, trips, and even a brand new high-performance candy-apple red *Corvette*. Tommy appeared to be the true blue Latin-American gigolo. A number of the older women used to say he was 'doll dizzy,' and the younger girls just drooled over him, but because the younger women usually lacked the financial resources of the older women, they rarely, if ever, got to experience his sexual prowess. It was clear that Tommy was strictly in it for the cash.

Albeit his looks and sexual mastery were patently legendary, they were far from being his most unique trait. His most distinctive characteristic was his eerie sense of humor, which was so far off the charts, that

it no longer resembled any form of comedy. It came closer to being something demented. Consequently, he was careful with whom he shared his strange forms of humor, lest he tarnish his lucrative reputation. Tommy was the kind of guy to make jokes about the unfortunate Jews, who'd been gassed in the Nazi concentration camps; yet, because of his charm and good looks, he was somehow forgiven. Without his looks, he'd certainly have been viewed as an outcast. So much can be forgiven by a person's good looks.

Not only had Tommy memorized a strange joke for nearly every situation, but he was the wizard of weird, when it came to practical jokes. His humor was so bizarre, that sometimes after telling a joke, Tommy would be the only one laughing, yet he didn't care that no one was laughing along with him. In fact, he seemed to enjoy it, when his jokes flopped. But as mentioned, because of his great looks and sexual prowess, women just thought his strange jokes as nothing more than a minor quirk. However, there was one event, which stands-out in my mind, as real a show-stopper. It remains my most unusual recollections of him.

Because of the building's architecture, when

passing through the front door of *Rob Paul's Club*, the members would immediately turn left, and walk down a short section of hallway to the lobby. There, they'd be greeted by a beautiful shapely blond receptionist, Ms. Francine Bayer, from the Finger Lakes area of New York. I remember Finger Lakes, simply because Francine had long beautiful fingers, which she was forever using to twirl her gorgeous blond locks. She'd slowly and repeatedly wrap and unwrap locks of her hair, nearly the entire time, I'd talk with her. Whenever, it was my turn to talk, Francine would provocatively chew gum, with her mouth slightly open, occasionally positioning the pink tip of her tongue in a highly provocative manner. She reminded me of John Travolta's co-star in *Grease*, the alluring bombshell Olivia Newton John, and not just in face and figure, but she also possessed the actress's dazzling smile, and [effervescent](#), seemingly perpetual cheerful, personality.

Fair Francine answered the club's business phone, welcomed and signed-up new guests, handed out locker keys, gave every guy a reason to gawk, and because of her stunningly sexy appearance, inadvertently made most of the female members

slightly angry, and prone falsely gossip about her. Still, for all her blinding glamor, and despite the gossip, Francine seemed to me to be a young and trusting virgin. Nevertheless, she clearly wanted Tommy to ask her out, butt the Latin stud never did. It was obvious to everyone that he loved to toy with her, and she greatly rejoiced in his attentions, at least until one strange event occurred.

It was about eight pm, and I was supposed to be working as the pool lifeguard, but since no one had come to swim that evening, I was hanging-out by the club's entrance. That's when I saw Tommy's red *Corvette* pull into the parking-lot. Instead of his usual gym bag, he was carrying a bright yellow, rather expensive looking, leather bowling bag. Tommy had never before mentioned that he bowled. *That bowling bag and ball is likely a gift from another satisfied female.* As I stepped outside to greet him, I pointed at the yellow bag, and asked him if he was a bowler.

"Hell no! I hate that stupid game. But Joey, you need to check out this fine leather bowling bag, and the really cool bowling ball I've got inside it. I can guarantee that you've never seen a bowling ball quite as cool as this one." Tommy insisted.

He then held up the bowling bag, for my inspection.

Indeed, when I touched the outside, the leather felt supple and smooth, like fine calf skin, and I could feel, the curved form and weight of the spherical ball, just on the other side of the expensive soft leather, ergo I wondered why Tommy had brought the bowling ball, since he said he hated the game. *Maybe he's trying to sell it.* Tommy then looked around as if to see if anyone was watching.

“If you think the leather bag is nice, wait till you get a look at the first-rate bowling ball inside. It's a real butte... a one of a kind, Joey... guaranteed to throw a strike every time. It's priceless, man.” Tommy again repeated. *What the hell is he talking about?*

Tommy then unzipped the bag for me to examine the contents, while strangely smiling. *Why is he smiling like that?* Again, he looked around, as if to make sure that no one was coming or watching, then he dramatically pulled it half open, so I could partially examine the bowling ball. Peering inside, there was no bowling ball, but instead, something rather shockingly!

As I peered into the bag, I first realized that there wasn't the expected smooth black spherical object, but there was something sort of spherical; however, it was hairy. It wasn't until I spied the bridge of the

oversized [schnozzola](#) attached to one side of the hairy object, that I realized it was a human head, but even then I thought that perhaps it just might be fake, but after closer examination, I realized it was genuine. For a second or two, it was difficult to accept the reality of the head. Inside the beautiful leather bowling bag was a middle-aged man's severed head, complete with a lot of long salt and pepper hair! The skin was slightly grayish and a little waxy in appearance, although it possessed a certain strange translucence, with powdery make-up on some of its surfaces. Indeed, it was the real thing. I assumed that the head was preserved flesh, since there was no blood, and as mentioned the face had been smeared with a little make-up, some of which had come-off. A plume of cheap perfume floated-up from the bowling bag. *Tommy must have sprinkled cologne on it.* The gigolo was chuckling, apparently enjoying my shocked expression. *Tommy is fucking weird!*

“Is that thing really a human head, Tommy?” I asked, even though I knew it was real.

“This thing is real as death, Joey. It's just some old man's head... No big deal, Joey!” He proudly responded, while studying my face to gauge the

head's effect on me.

“I guess that’s one thing we can count on... death.” I responded.

“What could be more dependable, Joey? Death is the most dependable thing ever to exist. Between death and taxes, death wins for unswerving dependability. Everyone’s gotta eventually die! It’s an absolute guarantee. Yeah... death is real. It’s so reliable.” He smiled the entire time he was saying this. *Those two facts (real and death) seem oxymoronic.*

“Why does this head smell like cologne, Tommy?” I questioned.

“I just sprinkled a little on, cuz this head kinda smelled. It’s not rotten, just kinda chemical like, so I used some of that expensive men’s cologne, one of my lady customers laid on me. Now, this dead head probably smells better than we do, Joey. Ha, ha, ha...” He answered.

“What the hell are you doing, bringing that gross hairy thing in here, and where’d you get it anyway, Tommy? You do know, if the cops find-out that you have this head, you’re probably gonna go to jail? Where the fuck is the rest of the poor guy’s body?” I inquired.

At first, I didn't think Tommy wanted to answer my question. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, and blinked, making a small O-shape with his mouth. *He's trying to decide if he can trust me.*

"Well, Joey, I went to a pretty wild party last night in a God damned grave yard... of all places. It was called something like *Old Comfort Mountain Churchyard*... up in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Lots of good looking women and a bunch of bikers, were there... plenty of booze and every kind of dope. Went with that old chick named Brenda, the one always swimming in that purple bikini. She's a little fat, but she always pays good. After that party, she'll probably never talk to me again. I dropped some weird kind of hallucinogen, probably brown mescaline, but I didn't throw-up, and I usually throw-up after taking mescaline. Things got more than a little crazy, but I mean that in a fun kinda way! That party was a blast! But, you know Joey, bikers can get to be'n over-the-top, when they're fucked-up on who knows what kind of shit!" Tommy explained.

"I'll bet it was one hell of a party. But you still haven't told me how you got this head." I said, trying not to appear too curious, when I was.

To make a long story short, when Tommy had

gone to that cemetery party, several of the drug-and-alcohol-crazed party attendees, including Tommy, for some reason, had broken into one of the white marble vaults, of a mausoleum, pulled out a body, and desecrated the deceased, by cutting his head off with a biker's pocket knife. They then replaced the headless corpse, closed up the marble vault, by repositioning the broken piece of marble, and somewhat resealed the mausoleum's vault, by using a tube of toothpaste from one of the bike's saddlebags. The head was then passed around the party goers, and rolled around on the grass, and then thrown from person to person like a football. After the party, Tommy ended-up taking the head home, as a memento. I don't know where he'd gotten the bowling bag, but it was the perfect covert satchel for carrying the head.

“Listen Tommy, you need to put it back where you got it, or just get rid of it. Use a lot of gasoline, and burn it real good, till the teeth and bones shatter, in a fifty-five gallon drum, then scatter what's left in the Potomac River, but it's probably easier and best to just put the head back on the body.” I advised.

“No, Joey, maybe I should put it in the DC reflecting pool, tonight. It'd drive the district cops

crazy, and give the news people something to talk about, tomorrow. They'll go nuts over that one! Or, maybe I should stick it up in Lincoln's lap, over at the Lincoln Memorial." Tommy suggested. *Tommy sounds insane. Why did he bring that thing, here?*

Back then, there weren't cameras in every store, and on every corner, roof, and intersection, like there are now, so Tommy might have actually been able to leave the head in the reflecting pool, or in Lincoln's lap, without being photographed. There's something distressing about all of today's 'big brother,' with the massive amounts of warrantless invasive surveillance, especially the drones, that'll soon be flying over all our American cities, if they're not already. Nevertheless, we've got to give the military industrial complex (MIC) some way to make money, while we give-up some of our freedoms, and a whole lot of our money in the process. Perchance, the MIC could just manufacture things, designed to save the environment: solar panels, wind turbines, high efficiency electric motors, better forms of insulation, potent storage batteries, plants which produce more oxygen and consume more carbon dioxide, etc.

There's nothing quite like giving the government your money, so they can then spy on you! They are

so good at protecting us, that soon we'll all be in poverty, or locked-up in prison. I'm certainly not for crime, but there's something depressing about so much governmental control. Recently, I just got back from London and realized the extent to which a paranoid government can go with hanging-up lots of cameras... how sad! There's hardly a square foot of London not watched and filmed/recorded by a camera. There are over 500,000 CCTV cameras in London, and over 15,000 in their underground system, and that doesn't include the privately owned cameras. While the English people are generally wonderful, intelligent, and caring, London is overcrowded, and over-priced. The stores strongly discourage you from using their restrooms, unless you're buying something. The public restrooms, usually out on the street, smell like hell, cost too much, and should you try to duck behind a building or a bush to pee, you're almost certain to be on a camera, and so you might be arrested. Thank goodness, London has a lot of fog. Of course, there's a real chance that many of the cameras can record through the fog, now.

I'm convinced, that everyone's, who's capable of it, is entitled to more than one simultaneous life, one

public and one private, but such would be extremely difficult in London. In a way, I'm glad that this monitoring of every little insignificant detail of someone's life is at least happening in my old age. I wouldn't have been able to tolerate such an invasion of privacy in my youth. Had it been around, when I was young, I'd probably have been imprisoned and hung-out to dry, and not just for shooting-out cameras. In a serious way, such surveillance may spell the end of certain amounts of: mystery, romance, secrecy, free spirit, adventure, pranks, the hubcap game, sex in the rain, or on the beach, or in the park, etc. Besides, just imagine what would it be like, if every person, who was guilty of speeding, running a red light, cursing in public, getting in a fight, littering, adultery, yelling at some passive aggressive asshole, surfing certain websites, spending a night with a hooker, discussing personal things on the phone, getting drunk and staggering from bar to bar, peeing or puking in an alley, jaywalking, throwing a temper tantrum, cheating on a parking meter, etc. was recorded, to be laid bare for government scrutiny? Just how much control, is good for society, and who's entitled to make such decisions?

Oh sure, it's nice to think that such surveillance will be used in helpful ways, to keep America's citizens safe, but interviews with people who've worked for the *CIA* prove that the term 'helpful' may be open to wide interpretation, and that the *CIA* may not be as concerned with public safety as it is about controlling people for their own interests and gains. At my current age, I'll probably be gone, before the government surveillance gets too oppressive. At least in that respect, death has some minor appeal, though I still fear it. I loath myself for that stupid fear. If I were a young man now, to escape big brother, I'd probably move to another less advanced country; after all, there's a good chance they have better healthcare. I like the idea of living somewhere close to Barcelona, but not right in the city, but within a twenty minute drive.

The businesses which supply the hardware and various other accouterments to the various government entities, are no doubt desperate to reap the profits from things such as: surveillance equipment, police paraphernalia, jails and jail supplies, drones and associated equipment, courthouse security systems, police station security systems, police car specializations, 'police

communication gear, riot control gear, privatized prisons, as well as all the associated supplies and equipment. It sort of reminds me of the type of control religious zealots are known to impose on their members, or how the Saudis treat their women. Just how much big brother do we really need? Big brother reminds me of the Puritans, the Wahhabi mission of Sunni Islam, the early Morons, Ruhollah Khomeini, etc. Some people aren't happy, unless they have control over others, and of course they do their best to convince people, and sometimes even themselves, that said control is for the right reason. Down here in Mobile, Alabama, those people who protest against big brother, are considered to be foolishly liberal. Red necks tend to love the police, and police state. But, the people, who love big brother, and want to control others, are usually the most out of control themselves. A high percentage of my redneck friends are drunks, who claim to believe in God and country. Sure, some police are good and courageous people... some.

It will probably only be a few more years down the road, before the government puts cameras and listening devices inside your home. Yet, in a manner of speaking, they already do, since currently they can

remotely access the cameras in your cellphones and computers. The operators of these forms of surveillance are often run by Homeland, but they also provide the intelligence to state police agencies. Moreover, there are now drones and satellites traversing the skies and heavens with cameras that can film in the infrared (and other wavelengths), capable of looking right through the roof and walls of your homes and businesses, listening to your every word and watching your every move, perhaps even your bowel movements. Maybe we'll soon be implanting listening devices with a tiny GPS locator in the mastoid sinuses of each person, who is found guilty of a felony, so that the government can track and listen-in on everything they hear or say. The government already takes their DNA. Maybe one day, they'll be injecting/implanting these micro devices in the mastoid processes of newborns. The rational might be... if the subsequent adult isn't doing anything illegal, the implant won't matter. While the mastoid sinuses are used to amplify certain audible frequencies in animals, they don't really do so much for human hearing, ergo they maybe the perfect spot for a small implant.

Whenever the government feels the urge, they

can just digitally search the ‘constant ongoing recording,’ back to whatever date and time they wish, and listen to what the person has said and listened to. Quite possibly, the government now collects the DNA off of every newborn, when they do the standard heel-stick. The government already has the technology to listen to what’s being said in the vicinity of any phone, be it hardline, cellphone, computer, or satellite-phone, regardless of whether that device is turned on or off. Furthermore, every phone call, regardless of the type of phone (hardline, cell phone, satellite, etc.), has been recorded and is stored, for roughly the last thirty years! There’s little doubt that big brother thinks that he needs to know everything, while you, the taxpayer, get to pay that wonderful invasive technology. If you love having such control over your life, vote republican.

You pay for all this foolishness, so your government can spy on you! All this is presented to you, as if it’s for your protection, and to better preserve your freedom. The problem with giving people so much control, is that the people, who want that control, will always want more, and are often the last people, who should have it. Such folks generally feel that they deserve control. Often, they

feel they're entitled it. It doesn't take much intelligence to see that such an assumption is inherently faulty. As mentioned, control freaks want to control people, because they're out of control themselves.

Tommy zipped the bag closed, with the sickly sweet smelling severed head still inside, then marched-off toward the reception area, where the lovely Francine was speaking on the phone with a customer about their overdue gym membership payments. Her lyrically cheerful vocal cords could make any man agree to pay-up his membership. She was just getting off the phone, when her big baby blues popped open wide with delight, after she spotted Tommy, who then turned and conspiratorially whispered to me.

“Watch this, Joey. You're going to really love the shit out of this. Stay close and just see what happens. Don't say a word.” Tommy darkly suggested with a covert wink, then he turned back to smile at Francine.

Curious to see what he had planned, I followed Tommy to the lobby, where sat the alluring Francine. Unbeknownst to me, Tommy was about to play a joke on her, the bizarre nature of which, I've never

had seen before, nor since. He nodded to her, and sat in one of the guest chairs in front of her desk, and I sat next to him, wondering what he was up to. Francine was all smiles, and clearly appeared to have an incurable case of the hots for him. Many people at the health club suspected that they'd already had a sexual relationship, but it wasn't true. People do so love to gossip and speculate, especially when it comes to sex and love. It's a vicarious thing.

The gorgeous Francine then cut loose with a smoldering sexy look, which although it was meant for Tommy, it staggered me. She began twirling and fingering her medium length flaxen wavy hair, while dramatically chewing a large piece of gum with her lovely rotating lips pressed forward, in a sexy pout. Francine then arched her back, leisurely stretching, knowingly elevating and flaunting her ample breasts, incased in the world's tightest and sheerest light blue sweater, with clear and unavoidable visual evidence of intriguingly hard jelly bean sized nipples, pushing out the thin cashmere material. *God she hot!*

“Hey Tommy! What ya been up to, today?” Francine asked.

Contrastingly, Tommy the legendary latin lover seemed oblivious to Francine's display of femininity.

Instead, he only frowned and stared at the floor, then pointedly twice faked a cough, while looking worried.

“Nothing much Francine, but I think I’m get’n a cold. Don’t feel too good, babe. You mind go’n back to the lady’s locker-room and get me some tissue, so I can blow my nose? This congestion is driving me crazy.” Tommy politely commented. *What’s he doing?*

“Sure thing, Sweetie... Just give me a sec, Tommy. Sorry you’re not feeling well, baby. You look good though, not sick! In fact, you look wonderful... as always! I’ll be right back with your *Kleenex*. Joey, would you please answer the phone, if it rings, while I’m gone? I’ll hurry Tommy.”

“Sure thing, Francine...” I responded.

Still rotating her lips and chewing her gum, with that lovely full mouth, while twisting her thick beautiful light blond hair around her right index finger, Francine responded with a wink. She then got-up from behind her desk and casually headed down the hall, toward the ladies locker-room, to retrieve the requested *Kleenex*. As she walked past, I turned, since Francine was one of those statuesque women, who looked equally appealing coming and

going. She had that kind of butt... round, high, and firm, so taut that it not only jumped left and right, but sort of tightly vibrated, with each step. That, and a women's inguinal groove, are a couple of my favorite *objets d'art*.

Once she had gone through the door and into the ladies' locker-room, at the speed of light and with bowling bag in hand, Tommy suddenly sprang from his chair, and dashed behind Francine's desk. He unzipped the bag, grabbed the head, by its' long grayish brown hair, and yanked the grisly thing up and out of the bowling bag. The freed head, swinging by its' hair, was a strange sight to behold. *God, someone did a messy job of cutting through the neck.* The head was facing me, swaying in a wild conically circular fashion, with its proboscis pointing left then right, as Tommy used his free hand to pull open the receptionist's deep double-sized lower right desk drawer. Looking inside Tommy commented.

"Yep, there's Francine's monstrous pocketbook; big enough for this ugly head to fit in. It's a hell of a lot bigger than this fucking bowling bag." Tommy mentioned, while laughing and snickering.

Francine's trademark giant handbag didn't seem to fit, with her having such a trim, but well

developed figure. The pocketbook was something which mothers, or older women, with too many grandkids, carried. The handbag was big enough to pack lunch for a family of twelve. Momentarily, Tommy set the head on the desk, pulled the top of the handbag wide open, then he again grabbed the gruesome head's mop of hair, and crammed it down inside the huge purse. *Holy shit! Should I say something?* At that point, I figured Tommy was going to be arrested.

He then closed the desk drawer, brushed a few hairs away from the desk top, then zipped-closed the empty bowling bag. Hurriedly, Tommy rounded the desk and sat back down in the same chair, to await the return of the sexy happy-go-lucky Francine. A second later, I heard the door to the lady's locker room open.

"Here I come, with your *Kleenex*, Tommy." She happily sang-out, from far down the hallway, heading back to her desk in the lobby.

During this brief adventure, Tommy had probably noticed that there was a pack of gum in the Francine's purse; on the other hand, since she was forever chewing gum, it was a pretty safe bet, that she had gum in her purse. Before I had time to

carefully consider the possible ramifications of what Tommy had done, Francine came strutting into the lobby, humming some happy little tune, with a few tissues clutched in her long graceful red-tipped fingers.

“Here ya go, Tommy, here’s your tissues to blow your handsome nose.” She stated, as she amorously handed him the *Kleenexes*.

Happily, I noticed that one more button had been strategically undone on her sheer light blue sweater, and her long hard nipples looked even larger and more inviting. She’d obviously been playing with her nipples, to bait Tommy. *God, she’s hot! I don’t understand how Tommy resists her.* If they’d spent the night together, it was clear that Tommy had not formed any attachment. Right then, I felt a major pang of jealousy.

“Need anything else, Tommy?” She suggestively inquired, as she ever so slowly rounded her desk, giving us one more look at her fully formed derrière. Just hearing a comment like that from the gorgeous Francine was a sensory overload. But again, the renowned gigolo, Tommy, appeared to be completely unfazed. He just blew his nose into the tissue, then wiggled the tip of his index finger in his right ear,

causing me to recall Albert, the big friendly orange colored orangutan, at the West Virginia coot show, only a few years prior. It's amazing the various ways that trigger memories from years passed.

"Thanks for the tissues, Francine. You know my ears are kind of stopped-up from this damn head-cold. Hey girl, you wouldn't happen to have a piece of chewing gum, would you? You know, sometimes chewing on a piece of gum will open my ears, and right now I feel like I'm underwater." *Christ, she's going to look in her purse!* Needless to say, the suspense was killing me!

"Ahhhh... Sure thing Tommy... I got some *Juicy Fruit* in my purse. My sister chews *Beemans*, cuz she dates a pilot, but I like *Juicy Fruit* best. You know, I'd give you anything you want, Tommy." She happily responded, causing me to wish she'd said that to me.

As she made this comment, she sat down behind her desk, never taking her beaming gaze off Tommy, and with the tip of her tongue provocatively touching her upper lip, she used her right hand to pull open the large desk drawer, containing her old-lady purse. Without glancing down, and still eyeballing Tommy, she blindly attempted to thrust her hand into her pocketbook, but of course, the hairy severed head

blocked her, and so her dazzling sexy facial expression abruptly vanished, to be replaced by a questioning look. All while, she was still looking at Tommy. *Jesus, she's got to be touching the hairy head!* Francine clearly realized that something wasn't right concerning the contents of her purse.

The feel of the hairy head had to be confusing, and so the lovely Francine, then leaned-over to her right for a closer visual inspection of whatever it was that was stopping her hand from reaching her *Juicy Fruit*. She sniffed, then coughed once, likely due to the pungent smell of men's cologne, which Tommy had liberally doused on the head. Francine stood-up and successfully tugged the gruesome head free from the purse; most likely, she was thinking that it wasn't real, or it was just a wig with something attached.

As her arm raised-up, her hand was still clutching the hair, as the nose spun around to point directly at Francine's exquisite breasts, with the erotic jellybean nipples. *Even dead men love a beautiful pair of breasts.* That's when Francine realized exactly what it was she was holding. The realization elicited a momentary paralysis, then after a two-second delay, she snapped out of it, and released the gruesome hairy dome, then strangely her arms flew-out away

from her sides, and she shook her hands at high speed, as if she was trying to literally throw them off her arms. The repulsive head fell, careening off the edge of the wooden desk drawer, then thudded hard onto the beige tile floor, where it rolled out from behind the desk and briefly rocked back and forth. Absurdly, I briefly wondered if the head could feel the impacts from hitting the drawer and the floor. Next, Francine brought her hands in front of her face, stared at her palms, as if to say, 'I can't believe I touched a severed human head.' While Tommy was sporting an ear-to-ear grin, Francine's face was transformed into a mask of terror, as a high volume blood-curdling scream erupted from her lovely lips, and her head shook from side to side. *Wow, she's really freaking-out.* During the scream, I could see a large piece of gum stuck to one of Francine's upper back molars. *Her teeth are so white!*

That's when Tommy began to laugh. *He's too fucking weird.* The situation was sort of like, when Rick had given Harwood P. Wells the fake steroids, or when my Mom had given me the red pepper. But this seemed so cruel, since Francine was the epitome of innocence beauty, and she sincerely liked Tommy. *He's laughing at her fright.* In one ludicrous move,

Tommy had destroyed any potential for experiencing, what had to be incredibly sublime sex, with a ravishing and sweet, young woman.

Undoubtedly, everyone in the workout room of the club had heard Francine's deafening scream. She did a two-second stomping dance, by her desk, then quickly sprinted down the hall, making a left turn into the crowded main workout room, shrieking the entire way. She was distancing herself from the grotesque head, as fast as she could. Once in the workout room, and no doubt surrounded by people, Francine continued to blindly scream for a good ten or twenty seconds. This delay of explanation gave Tommy time to cover his tracks. The club members didn't have a clue what was wrong with her, since all she initially did was to shriek and sob, and thankfully without offering an explanation. The members did their best to calm her, so that they could question her, and find out what the problem was.

I'd never imaged that Francine would think that the gruesome head was so frightening, much as I didn't anticipate the magnitude of my Mom's response to the grass snake, being put down her dress. On the other hand, Tommy apparently knew how she'd respond. Such reactions seem to be a

feminine thing. While there are some women, who are indeed rather masculine, and there are some men, who are very much woman-like, there is nonetheless a great deal of difference in general between your average male and your average female. Masculinity and femininity is inclusive of many traits, which are open to debate, and I suppose you could say that said traits exist along something of a spectrum; regardless, of the presence of XX or XY chromosomes. There are about 1000 genes on the X chromosome, which is about ten times the number on the Y chromosome.

Perhaps, those screams represented an insult to the holiness of those two X chromosomes. After all, males are supposed to protect women. The club's patrons spent at least fifteen seconds, trying to calm down Francine, so that they could understand what had actually transpired to hijack Francine's mental stability. The head was just laid on the floor, passed the end of her desk, on its' right side facing me. *Hello, old man.* The head's left eye was half open. Perhaps, the undertaker had forgotten to glue it closed, or the fall had knocked the poorly glued eyelid ajar. That delay, which Francine's hysteria created, was all the time that Tommy needed. With

blinding speed and supreme agility, the latin gigolo unzipped the bowling bag, vaulted Francine's desk, retrieved the head from the floor, zipped the gruesome head back-up inside the expensive bag, closed the desk drawer, and vaulted back over Francine's desk. One of the members loudly spoke-up.

“What the hell are you saying Francine? What do you mean Tommy put a human head in your purse? Oh, come-on girl! You've got to be kidding me... a human head!”

Certain that the police would soon be coming and Tommy would be jailed, I'd just sat there, doing nothing. All these strange events were transpiring around me, and I remained only a spectator. That's when I heard the members moving from the workout room in our direction. Holding the bowling bag, with the head inside, Tommy was standing-up in the seat of his chair.

“Well, let's just go see, about this mysterious human head, Francine's talking about. Come with us, Francine! ” One older member was asserting.

“No! I not going back in there! That head is in there on the floor!” She screamed, electing to stay in

the workout room.

“Francine... a real honest to goodness human head?” I heard a woman dubiously ask, in a manner which indicated she thought Francine was lying.

By then, the tall agile Tommy, with bowling bag in hand, was chuckling, while still standing-up with his feet in his chair, gently pushing-up one of the light weight creamed-colored drop ceiling tiles. I still just sat there amazed, by the course of events.

As fast as light, Tommy had placed the bowling bag, with its’ the grizzly head, up into the drop ceiling, then he repositioned the drop tile in its metal framing. Having done this, he immediately dropped back down on his butt into his chair. He accomplished those maneuvers in barely five-seconds, before the people came pouring into the lobby. Tommy covertly glanced at me, ergo I could see he was clearly fighting a powerful urge to laugh. *Is he going to start laughing?* Still, Tommy barely managed to restrain his impending laughter.

To say the least, I was flabbergasted, and after all Francine’s screaming, I was seriously wondering about her sanity. As well, there was a nagging concern about the possible legal ramifications; for

should Tommy got caught, there would likely be the question of whether I was an accessory to some ghoulish felony. Most probably, I'd be marched off to jail along with Tommy, while the police, some attorneys, and later, a jury would try to sort-out the truth. For a few unpleasant seconds, I imagined calling my Dad from jail, trying to explain that bizarre scenario. *Hey Dad, I've been implicated in the desecration of a corpse!* Too often, cops love to make an arrest, without making an adequate attempt to determine the reality of what actually transpired. They frequently love stacking-up as many charges against the arrested individual as they can, then they leave it to the bail-bondsman and courts. In an odd way, it's similar to the motto of that famous airborne group, which goes something like, 'Kill'm all... let God sort them out.' Perhaps, the police motto should be, 'Arrest them all and let the courts sort them out.'

I wondered what the penalty would be for such a strange little crime? Desecration of a corpse, and using a body part for inflicting public terror. Such an arrest would have killed my socially conscious Mom. But after Tommy sat back down, all that remained of the evidence was the smell of expensive cologne.

"Just be cool and sit tight, Joey. Don't say a

word and everything will be alright, man. You'll see! They're coming now, so just stay cool, man! Act like you don't know why Francine ran out of the room. Not a word..." Tommy casually instructed. *Here comes the club members to check-out what Francine told them!* A half a second later, the bewildered club members came loudly barging into the reception area, and two of them went around behind Francine's desk and nervously peered into the drawer, down into her extra-large purse, but then seeing nothing out of the ordinary, they also looked in the other desk drawers. They peered under the desk, but of course, to no avail. Finally, they simply looked around the room, even behind the curtains. Finding nothing, they looked at each other and shrugged, then they called-out to Francine, who had no desire to return to the lobby and see the head again, and so she had remained in the workout room. Tommy just continued to look utterly mystified.

"There's nothing in your desk and nothing in this lobby, Francine. You sure you saw a human head in here, girl? There's nothing in here!" One man called-out.

At that point, Tommy pretended to look surprised at the mention of a human head. Francine

then yelled back, from the workout room.

“I’m telling you, it’s there, guys! I know what I saw and I touched it! I’m telling you it was a human head! I dropped it on the floor behind my desk! It’s in there, just keep looking. Look around on the floor! Tommy did it to me, and he was laughing at me... thought it was funny! My God!”

Cruelty scars the soul of the sadist and the victim; especially, if the victim starts to become like the sadist. Sometimes, it just takes the most causal contact, even a brief conversation with evil, to produce things such as: psychic injury and usury, exploration, fear, humiliation, etc. The sadist prides himself on injuring those around him: friends, spouse, therapist, strangers, etc.

The Murder of The Marquis by W. Aldiro
Molery

Those words caused the gym members to once again look around the floor and inside the desk. They also looked at Tommy and me, then having found nothing shrugged their shoulders. We just shrugged back, to imply that Francine was having a delusional moment. Then, the members in the lobby started giving each other knowing looks, as if to say that

Francine had a screw loose. Fortunately, Francine absolutely refused to come back to the reception area. The people, who'd looked through her desk and around the reception area, yelled back, telling Francine that there was nothing to be found. They also told Francine that neither Tommy, nor I had left the reception area, and couldn't possibly have removed the head. Indirectly, they were hinting that Francine was a wee bit looney.

“Francine, there's nothing in here, sweetie! You must have just imagined it.” One of the searching members called back, rolling his eyes, implying that Francine was crazy.

“Oh, I guarantee that head is in there. Keep looking. You'll find it.” Francine insisted.

For a few minutes, the members continued to look and mill around the reception area, while Tommy theatrically whispered that he didn't know what had gone through Francine's mind. He kept shrugging his shoulders and tapping the side of his temple, with the tip his right index finger, implying that Francine was having mental health problems.

“Maybe, she's on her period. Ha, ha,…” Tommy quietly suggested to one of the curious searching

members. *Tommy's the crazy one.*

It was over an hour, before Francine, accompanied by two woman members, returned to her desk to reclaim her purse. Several guys offered to drive her home, but she left alone, and still upset; her face was pale and splotchy from tears. Once Francine was gone, Tommy told the members that she'd always been a bit crazy. *Tommy's truly nuts, but Francine has definitely over reacted!* He did his best to make people believe that he had some inside track on her lack of mental stability, and claimed that was why he could never be serious about a "girl like that."

"Besides, no one knows how a women will act, when they're on their period! And, I'm not saying that for sure I know that she's been see'n a shrink, but I'm just say'n, she's been acting plenty strange. I'm not the only one who's noticed her strange behavior. Just ask Joey, here." He uttered this piece of malicious propaganda, while pointing at me. *He's put me in this insanity!* To avoid this dilemma, I acted like I suddenly remembered something and left for the club's pool area.

"I've got to get back to the pool, I'm in the middle of backwashing the filters." I hurriedly lied.

And so, I stood-up, and hurriedly walked out the lobby toward the men's locker room, to return to the pool area. Thus, I avoided becoming even more entangled in Tommy's crazy fiasco. Nevertheless, by my lack of action, I had to some degree thrown-in with Tommy, and felt like a Faustian participate. Sometimes inaction speaks louder than action. Never have I understood his macabre humor, nor his willingness to destroy his friendship with the innocent and lovely Francine. Needless-to-say, I didn't want the severed head to be discovered just up above the ceiling, so I just stayed isolated in the pool area, and prayed that Tommy would leave me alone, which he did, since he probably was having too much fun selling the hoax to the mystified members. From then on, my working with Francine remained awkward. She was not certain of how much I was involved; especially since I refused to discuss the it, with her. However, because the law could easily have become involved, I refused to delve into the topic with her.

“Jesus Joey, you know damn well that you saw that big ugly hairy head, when I pulled it out of my purse and dropped it on the floor, didn't you?” Francine demanded me to answer the next day, when

she'd returned to work in the lobby.

At that point, I didn't dare say anything, but only slightly nodded my head. The severed head was still in the bowling bag, and hidden up in the drop ceiling, of the lobby. Consequently, being arrested, if discovered, remained a concern. Had I told the truth, the police may have come, searched, and found it, and I'd have been implicated.

"I'm not in this mess between you and Tommy, Francine; it's strictly between you and him. You're the one, who obviously had the hots for him, and well... let's just say Tommy is Tommy. I've got nothing to do with all this. I'm out of your dealings with Tommy. I know for sure that you're not crazy, but let's just leave it at that." And having said that, I hung my head and walked off, disappointing her.

Thank God, Francine didn't push the issue; perhaps, because she felt that she was partially at fault, for putting her blind faith in the crazy good-looking latin gigolo. As far as I was concerned, Tommy had cast-aside sex at its finest, for a pointless and gruesome joke, but inadvertently he probably did Francine a favor.

I was afraid to discuss the issue, nevertheless I

didn't tell Francine she had been wrong about seeing the severed head, but neither did I tell on Tommy. After the 'head incident,' Francine wasn't quiet as outgoing... no more beautiful radiant smiles... no more bubbly enthusiasm. The old man's head had put the whammy on her sparkling personality, and not just toward Tommy and I, but toward nearly everyone at the club. She plainly refused to speak with Tommy, and prior to the head, that was something I didn't think could possibly happen. Most likely, the change in Francine wasn't so much owing to the unpleasantness of the head, as much as it was due to her being betrayed by someone, she'd thought that she was in love with, someone she wrongly assumed she could trust.

A young woman-child offering up her innocence, in such an open and honest manner is extremely vulnerable, hoping to share her life with someone, who she's grossly misjudged. Francine was indeed lucky that she never had sex with Tommy, for young girls and women generally confuse great sex for true love, largely owing to the fact that the baby emerges via the same orifice that the penis enters, and the man sucks on the same nipples as does the baby, this oxytocin-based phenomenon is explained later in

these books. Too often young girls and women base their romantic decisions on sex appeal and charm. Few men care about the psychological vulnerability of a young female virgin. Francine was ripe for the damaging, by someone who was the absolute opposite of what she thought him to be. Perchance something like that had happened to Tommy, years before, but I doubt it. Some people are just born with the love of evil, knowing that love sex-based love wounds the female deeply. Maybe Cat Stevens had said it best in his 1967 song (below), “*First Cut is the Deepest*,” which was still playing regularly over the air back then. However, it truth, it is generally the female who gets their heart torn apart, not so much the male.

“I would have given you all of my heart
but there’s someone who’s torn it apart
and she’s taking almost all that I’ve got
but if you want, I’ll try to love again
baby I’ll try to love again but I know...”

With its’ intensely gruesome head, the fine

leather bowling bag, concealed above the ceiling tiles, wasn't ever discovered. Tommy just recovered it, late the following afternoon, while Francine had gone to use the restroom, and there were only a few members in the club. The day Tommy played the trick on Francine, most of the club members wrongly assumed that the divine blond receptionist had patently been hysterical, or that she had experienced some type of hallucination, a psychotic episode of sorts. These are words, for which psychiatrists and psychologists have little actual neurophysiological understanding, since they typically have limited knowledge about how the actually malfunction during these psychiatric maladies.

Other people in the club suggested that Francine was probably on drugs, most claiming that she must have done LSD. One absurd woman, who claimed to be a witch, suggested that Francine was, in fact, a 'true psychic,' but just didn't know that she was; and that what she (Francine) had actually seen was the spirit of a dead man, who'd come back from the spirit world, and was trying to communicate with her. The suppose witch also contended that Francine wasn't yet mature enough to handle such a spirit-world communication, and that was why she freaked-

out. *What a load!* Indeed, that woman, who claimed to be a witch, had clearly done too many drugs. People who often can't succeed in the actual world, opt for the supernatural world, because it's infinitely easier to understand than advanced medical science. Besides, in the supernatural world, you're allowed to simply make-up things; in effect, invent lies. In science, you can't successfully do that. Witches are motivated by their own desire for legitimacy, and there are plenty of idiots ready to buy into in their bullshit. After all, half the people on earth are on the left side of the bellcurve.

That same witch woman used to tell the club members that she communicated with angels, the dead, and even various demons. She said she cast all kinds of spells, and carried various charms and gemstones to protect herself, when communicating with the latter. The woman seemed to be desperate for recognition. She was smart but just barely. I was shocked at how many people believed her lies. It's not rare for folks to desperately crave validation, to the point that they literally believe their own bullshit. People who genuinely earn recognition, generally, could care less about the corresponding recognition, and tend avoid it. A clinical

psychologist, who worked-out in the gym, later told Francine that she'd had a hallucination.

"Don't worry Francine, you're not schizophrenic. Almost everyone occasionally has a hallucination, and it's really no big thing. It's actually a very normal condition to occasionally experience. It happens to almost everyone, at some time or the other. Don't worry such things are just temporary. They seem real, but they're nothing to worry about. You'll be okay. Don't worry, sweetie." She sagely advised.

I have them often, but I love them! Wonder what that idiot means? Of course, Francine didn't buy any of that. She knew what she'd seen, and that what she'd pulled out of the bag was indeed a tangible human head. A few conservative club members thought she was completely nuts, mainly because she screamed, so long and loudly that day. No one fully believed poor Francine, except for Tommy and I. If the truth be told, her over reaction, that day, did seem to go beyond the realm of sanity; still, everyone's got their particular phobias. I'm deathly afraid of death.

Half the men, and virtually all the women in the club, including the aforementioned female clinical

psychologist, believed Tommy's story, simply because he was so detached, relaxed, and charismatic, but mostly because he was so good-looking. Thinking back, and with a bit more education under my belt, I now think he was what many shrieks might call a bipolar narcissistic psychopath. Most psychopaths, if nothing else, are charismatic, and Tommy was the charmer's charmer.

It seemed to me, that because he had such profound good looks and contrived personality, the women simply wanted to believe him, and were willing to overlook his actual aberrant behavior. Correspondingly, most of the female club members despised Francine, merely because of her devastating great looks. One thing was certain; from then on, Francine detested Tommy, and was no longer remotely interested in his good looks. In fact, he'd terrified her, and in the process, made her appear crazy to the club members.

In this imperfect world, Francine was infinity better off, for having been cruelly deceived by the severed head. Or, maybe I'm just trying to justify my participation, for my not having said anything to stop it, or to back up Francine's claim about having seen the head in her pocketbook. And though the incident

had made her far less outgoing, and perhaps less innocent, it also had made her wiser, more discerning, and therefore safer in a world with more than a few dangerous predators. Prior to the severed head, she'd been fully trusting of Tommy, ergo an easy target for a pillager of trusting human spirits.

After the grisly-head experience, she instantly became much more reserved, no longer an easy mark. Tommy was the only guy I've known, who'd willingly allow a prank to supersede a beautiful woman's advances. Perversely, he preferred that silly sick joke, a dark hoax, to what had to have been amazing sex, but then, few men received the amount of female action Tommy did. Of course, there was the fact that he was paid for his prowess. Trading a magnificently alluring woman for a stupid crazy stunt, seemed like such a complete waste.

After a couple of weeks passed, I asked Tommy what he'd done with the head. He said that he was using it as a door stop for a bedroom closet door, but was thinking about making it into a lamp. To do this, he talked about putting the human head inside a rubberized, whole-head halloween vampire mask, so that his house guests would think it was a fake.

“You see Joey, since there'll be a real head inside

the mask, the joke will be on them! Ha, ha... It's a Coll idea, you've got to admit, man." Tommy weirdly responded. *Who the hell does crap like that?*

Yes, there are profound clinical differences in people's sense of humor; sometimes, they're light years apart! One person's humor and laughter is another's sadness and revulsion. There was nothing enlightening about Tommy's humor; it was like a black hole. Nothing escaped it.

The latin gigolo could easily tell that I was not comfortable, with his human head trick. Later, when he'd try to talk it up with me, I'd listen, yet remain plainly disinterested. After that day, I was polite, but considerably less friendly. He seemed to be genuinely shocked at having lost my friendship. I was shocked that he was so surprised, but I concealed it. I didn't hate him, but honestly felt sorry for him, yet I was also somewhat afraid of him. The head in the bag didn't make me afraid of him, but the comment about the vampire mask and the lamp, followed by his laughter, had given me pause. Sometimes, I've wondered what more unusual things I could have unearthed about his personality, had I faked my friendship, allowing Tommy to assume that I thought that the gruesome head thing was actually a good

thing. For all I knew, he could have been a regular Jeffrey Dahmer, the notorious Milwaukee Cannibal.

Later at the nearby college library, I back checked the local newspapers, but never found any mention of a mausoleum being desecrated. So, I began to wonder about how he might have actually obtained the head. The story about the biker party in the graveyard might have been true or it might have been a cover for actual murder. I sensed there existed something about the way Tommy made his living, and his strange sense of humor. Clearly, Tommy didn't love women; at least, not the way he outwardly professed to most folks. His sex life was a financially motivated three-ring circus. I suppose that the parts of the brain, which represent greed might hook-up to the *Septal Nucleus*, just as do the parts which recognize feminine beauty; if so, perhaps money caused sexual arousal in Tommy's twisted mind.

While the trick he played on Francine, was funny to Tommy, my loss of her trust and friendship, as well as seeing the marked change in her personality, disturbed me; especially since, I worked in the club with her. Tommy honestly didn't care. He had not the slightest amount of empathy. I also lacked

empathy, yet I didn't enjoy hurting people. In his strange mind, Francine's situation didn't matter, and he literally couldn't understand my standoffishness toward him. Generally, psychopaths can recognize a kindred spirit, but perhaps, I wasn't a full fledged psychopath; since there was a certain difference, between Tommy and I; besides the fact that he was better looking.

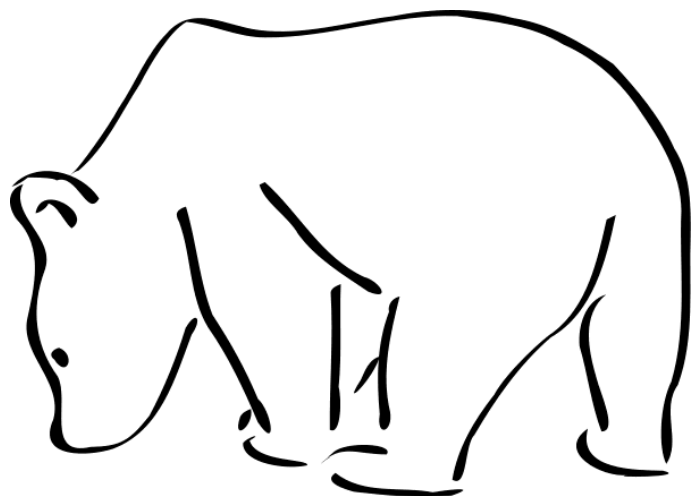
Something told me that the man with the great looks and the dynamite sex appeal, actually hated women, or he enjoyed hurting people, more than loving them. He had gone to great lengths to hurt a clearly innocent girl. Moreover, he only had sex with needy women, who could satisfy his financial needs. All that sex and still he was, at best, a misogynist, but at worst there was no telling what Tommy may have been. One thing about people and sex, which never ceases to amaze me, is how dissimilar we all can be.

That day with the head... I should have tried to stop him, and I didn't. At the very least, I made a poor judgment call. My moral fiber was too flimsy. Odd as this may seem, that weird event bothers me more now, than it did then. Within a month of the incident, Francine left the club and went to work as a

checkout clerk in a grocery store for less pay. Too many of the members kept bringing-up the human head.

“See any more severed heads lately, Francine?”

OBJ



KILLING THE BEAR TO CURE CANCER

When the inoperable intrathoracic (inside the chest) mass was first diagnosed, the physician said it was about the size of a large lemon or small orange. Upon hearing this, I recall thinking that it seemed so wrong to use a colorful health-giving fruit to describe the size of such a dismal bloody thing as a death-dealing tumor. *The doctor should just used measurements... inches or centimeters... anything but fruit!* The lethal malignancy was pressing on the posterior right side of my friend's youthful heart. Matt Kelly was my best

friend, and barely sixteen, when he was informed about the terminal neuroblastoma growing, behind his heart.

He'd first gone to the doctor because his altered heart rhythm and elevated blood pressure. After the tests were run, he and his parents were informed that it was an inoperable deadly cancerous mass, which had been playing havoc with his heart. Matt's prognosis was terminal, and he was told to prepare for the end to arrive in a few months. His dad, a full bird colonel in the US Air Force, was clearly shocked and refused to believe Matt's diagnosis, and so he sent Matt to nearly every neurological specialist in the country, desperately searching for some type of medical help. For a few months, the Colonel just refused to believe their diagnosis, but after every physician iterated the same sad thing... death in roughly six months, his just began to drink more. Death is the only true undefeated heavy weight world champion. It may lose a round or two, but in the end, like Floyd Mayweather, it emerges victorious. No doubt, all the religious fanatics are now claiming I'm wrong, and we all have eternal life, if we but chose to believe.

After the doctors told Matt, he wouldn't be around

much longer, Matt underwent an unexpected metamorphosis. Indeed, he was a nice guy to begin with, but weirdly, once he received the dire news, he became even more pleasant, more outgoing, more cheerful, and he wasn't a religious kid, nor were his family members, and so he didn't have the comfort of a heaven to look forward to. Nevertheless, Matt's personality became even more warm and affable! It was like death made him a better person! At least on the surface, he appeared happier!

Perchance, death brings-out the best in some people, liberating the finer pieces of their gray matter. For some reason, I think this happens, only in the best of people. Matt had always been a good and brave young man, and with the burden of approaching death, he displayed not the slightest twinge fear, at least not when around his friends and family. While staring into the merciless face of the grim reaper, Matt only smiled.

Prior to the tragic diagnosis, everyone loved Matt. To say the least, he was extremely popular. Even at his young age, he had been a champion athlete, holding two state track and field records in New Jersey. Teenage girls, as well as older women were crazy about him. At age of sixteen, females couldn't

resist his Irish charm. More than once, we'd gone somewhere to grab a bite to eat, and he'd meet some beautiful woman at twice his young age, and she'd take him home with her. Matt was also a caring person. If anyone needed help, Matt was there with a kind word, and a helping hand. As stated, even before the terminal diagnosis, he was truly a good person, but even more so, after death came aknock'n. This extraordinary psychological situation became unbearable for nearly everyone in the community. It made it all the more difficult to accept his immanent death. It was unbearable to watch such a good and cheerful young man, happily climb the gallows steps. No one could stand the idea of such a good-natured young man dying!

Most people, when forced to confront imminent death, undergo some seriously depressing mental transformations, becoming fearful, or angry, or gloomy, etc. But there was Matt, teetering on the brink of death, at the young age of sixteen, just smiling and seemingly filled with unaccountable happiness, and good will. You'd have thought he'd won the lottery, or just found the love of his life, instead of facing death. On the verge of dying, and he was able to exhibit genuine kindness, and without

apparent fear.

To better deal with Matt's death, his dad, the colonel, just drank more, and his mother went to the military doctor, who gave her an open script for 10 mg tablets of valium. That highly addicting drug was handed-out like candy, in those days. Women were prescribed the drug for the slightest mood change. Supposedly, one out of every ten women was addicted to the stuff. Leo Sternbach (1908-2005) probably never imagined the number of addicts his discovery of benzodiazepines (class of drugs to which valium belongs) would create, nor how much relief, from the stresses of the world, his drugs would sooth away. A mother loses her child, or a son loses his father, and the tranquil effects of propitiously applied valium may be a temporary Godsend, allowing the people to better navigate the dark waters of tragedy, but abuse that drug, and it leads to a special kind of hell. Addicting drugs have always been a double edged sword. It's all about the levels of dopamine which are left in the brain after abusing them... see the last chapter in book seven.

Though Matt was mentally stable, there was nonetheless a small schizophrenic fly trapped somewhere inside the helical history of his family's

genetics. When Matt first received the terminal diagnosis, his older brother, George, had for three months been being treated for that dreaded psychiatric malady. That condition runs from one to five percent of the population, depending on the country, as well as the part of the country. In the US, it's about one percent, with more per capita in cities, than in the more rural areas, since city life tends to be more stressful. The disease can be temporary, but if it lasts for more than a month or two, it is often for life. It can be caused by: genes, toxins (sublethal doses of nerve gas), drugs, lack of sleep, and/or stress. If caused by genes, it tends to be permanent, only temporarily treatable with meds, with the person frequently having to be switched to different meds, as their brain and liver adapts. George's schizophrenia was owing to both his genes, since there was a history of various affected ancestors, and the fact that he used various hard drugs.

After George, was released from the mental institution, and returned home, he then found-out about Matt's unfortunate fatal diagnosis. Yet shockingly, George, who indeed dearly loved his younger brother, seemed to be unfazed by Matt's prognosis of death in six months. Everyone in the

neighborhood, had expected George to flip-out, become psychotic, and perhaps have to be recommitted to the institution, yet George seemed totally unmoved by that fatal news!

Late that same night, hours after George got the bad news about Matt, the three of us (George, Matt, and I), 'borrowed' their family car, a new 1964 *Mustang* convertible, and went for a long drive. We all chipped in some cash for gas and weed. After filling the tank, we stopped at an old biker's broken-down *Airstream* trailer in the woods, where we purchased a lid (one ounce of weed) for eight bucks (those were the days). We stayed long enough to roll a few joints, then drove around the Virginia countryside, cranked-up the radio and listened to rock and roll, while enjoying the cannabis. One thing about drug dealers is that they are typically trustworthy in their dealings with buyers, for if they happen to screw one person out of what they are due, the word quickly gets out, and there goes their customers to another dealer. Smoking weed was always something of a surprise, since with each strain there was a different high. Plus, you never really knew, if something had been added, soaked into, or sprinkled onto said psychogenic plant material.

The herb seemed to make Matt more comfortable, both physically, in that he had less of the tumor-caused cardiac arrhythmia, as well as psychologically since he relaxed. Matt rode stretched-out on the back seat, eyes closed, his mind just drifting along with the music. George drove slowly, randomly selecting various deserted country roads, while I sat in the passenger seat and selected the tunes on the radio. Selecting the music was an important, and rather prestigious, assignment, when high on weed, because stoned on weed, music takes on a whole new level of importance. No doubt, that's why the vast majority of musicians use weed. When stoned, the musical part of the brain in the right hemisphere is more apt to be active, less inhibited by tiresome logical conscious thought.

Cruising along the back country roads, George plainly didn't seem to be too worried about Matt's terminal diagnosis, but just kept smiling, enjoying the music, and gazing through the windshield. *Maybe George's indifference is because of those psych meds, he's on.* But, Matt also noticed his brother's lack of concern, and when a song ended, Matt sat-up and turned the volume knob down, then spoke-up.

"You're acting kind of weird, George. You don't

seem to be worried about my neuroblastoma. It's like you don't think I'm going to die? Or maybe, you don't care. It's okay if you don't... whatever makes it easy for you. But still, I got to ask, where's your head at, about my dying." Matt said this without anger or malice, just an earnest frankness.

"I couldn't love you more baby brother, but you're probably not gonna die! Unless you actually want to die, and the way you're acting now, I think you just don't care about living. There's different kinds of being brave. There's the brave where you can bravely face the fact you're dying, and that's what you are. And that's pretty good for a sixteen year old. But then, there's the type of brave where you're willing to fight death for your life, and that's what you've got to become, Matt. As you are, you're just let'n yourself die. I don't give a shit what the doctors say. But, if you do what I tell you to do, you'll be okay. Ya see, doctors are great at killing people, sometimes they do it by just telling them they're gonna die. They scare the shit out of them, and the poor patient just starts fading away. Once a doctor tells someone that they're gonna die, the poor person usually just bows to the doc's greater wisdom, and begins the process of dying. Doc's are good at fighting injuries

and disease, not they don't teach the patient how to fight death. Sure, the patient has got something killing them, but the stress about knowing they're dying and that there's no hope, cuz the doctor said there's none, sort of overwhelms them, and then their body just sort of gives-up fighting whatever it is that's killing them. You can believe you're gonna die, or you can believe you're gonna live. If you do what I tell you, you will live, Matt! I guaran-funk'n-tee it, buddy! But, what I have in mind won't be easy, but I'll be there to help you through it. You can count on that, brother... I'll be there to help you. What I've got in mind is a real mother fucker, Matt! If you chose to do what I say, it'll rock you hard! Yeah, you're brave enough to die like a man, but the question is... are you tough enough to fight for your life? To live, you're gonna have to stick your head right up the devil's asshole." George spoke these confusing words with a magnum of truthfulness.

At the time, I wondered if George's comments were just the weed talking. Being an only child, I've never had a brother, but George made me realize some of what I was missing. His unusual statements certainly got our attention. At sixteen, Matt and I wondered about how one goes about fighting a neuroblastoma?

George had made that odd little speech, with his head inclined, giving off something of an eerie nobility. Maybe, it was just the weed affecting my perception, or his feeling noble.

Even though I was aware that George had just gotten out of the mental asylum, and was still taking psych meds, he didn't seem even slightly crazy, when he'd made that grandiose proclamation. George delivered his assertion with calm conviction; and with complete confidence.

George's words about Matt fighting against his death had put me in something of a dilemma, for even though the boastful George knew nothing about medicine, I found myself desperately wanting to believe him. Since I was stoned, I figured that I was just indulging in a little wishful thinking, but despite that, an intuitive part of my mind, was solidly buying into George's outrageous claim. Nevertheless, I questioned him.

"Come on George! Are you going to tell us that you know how to fix Matt's medical problem, when all the doctors in America haven't got the slightest fucking clue about what to do?" I skeptically questioned, while Matt listened-on.

“Yeah! That’s exactly what I’m tell’n you, Joey. I know it sounds plum crazy, but I actually know how to fix my brother. Do the docs know how to fix him? Hell, no! It will be up to Matt, here, to do the hard work, and it sure will be extremely hard work! It’s gonna be mind fucker! If you really want to live, Matt you’ll need to get your ever-loving shit together, and toughen-the-hell-up. You’ll literally have to climb through the asshole of death!” George responded. *The asshole of death?*

“We’re all ears, George. Lay it on us, man. What’s Matt here got to do? How do you plan to fix Matt’s neuroblastoma?” I asked, as Matt was now leaning forward over the seat back, anxiously awaiting George’s next response to my question.

Speaking to both Matt and me, George continued to explain. “You see, I’m not the one who fixes it. Matt has to do that. It works like this guys. Somewhere in Matt’s mind is this death monster, which is killing him; it’s the part of his mind that’s allowing that fucking neuroblastoma to grow, like it’s been doing. Matt’s not fighting that monster, and so the tumor keeps on growing. So far, Matt, you’ve just been accepting your death. That’s a big mistake, brother. The tumor and the monster are literally one and the

same... either way, they're both your death, Matt. Sure, it's sort of brave to resign yourself to your death, but that's not true courage. Courage is fighting death. Matt, you've got to fight for your life... fight against death. You have to kill it, kill death, kill that fucking monster! This may not make a lot of sense, to you two guys right now, but it's real as shit. I can show you how to do it, Matt, but I can't do it for you. After all, it's your tumor, so you got to kill it, Matt. If Matt works-up the courage to fight and destroy the monster, then he also kills his tumor. It's that fucking weird, and yet, it's that fucking simple. First Matt, you'll have to see death, and then, you'll have to work-up the courage to actually kill it. I'm gonna help you see the monster, Matt, but you've got to kill it. This process is not so easy to describe, and explaining it doesn't solve anything. It's sort of like using words to describe how great sex feels... words just don't cut it. This is something you have to experience, Matt."

"How the hell is Matt supposed to do that? How does he find what's killing him in his own mind, and how does he destroy it... the monster and the tumor, I mean?" I was fairly confused and wanted George to do a better job of explaining what he was talking

about.

“Like I said, there is no real way to put all this in words, Joey. It’s like trying to explain what a beautiful sunset looks like, to a man, who’s always been blind. I know I’ve had my troubles with schizophrenia, and you may have your doubts about my sanity, but what I’m talking about, will work. What I’m suggesting to help Matt is all he’s got! The docs got nothing for Matt. Here’s how the process works... If you drop some acid (LSD), you’ll be able to see what’s been trying to kill you. You’ll literally see your enemy, your tumor, your monster! Whatever is trying to kill you will make itself known, and it’s gonna be a motherfucker, dear brother. Death is never friendly! I guarantee it won’t be pleasant. It’ll be a real ass kicker, and facing it and killing it will be harder than anything you’ve ever done! But, if you want to live, this is your only real shot, at getting rid of that nasty-ass neuroblastoma.” *George sounds convincing.*

At this point in the conversation, I was still uncertain exactly what George was actually taking about. But one thing for sure, George was confident about what he was saying. After a moment, he continued.

“Death is never fun, and although you seem like you’ve come to terms with your death, that’s all you’ve done, and you have yet to actually fight your death. Right now, you’re like a deer frozen in the headlights, just waiting for the car to hit you, and doing nothing but watching it come, happy to die bravely, but you’ve got to become more like the lion, than the frozen deer. You’ve got to act! With what I have planned, you’ll be facing your own death, head-on, looking it square in the eye, gazing at the monster that is that awful neuroblastoma. You’ll have to turn the tables on it, and you have to become the predator. You’ve got to beat it young brother. You’ll have to destroy the fucking monster, and slaughter your own death.”

“It’ll be frightening the hell out of you. That monster will be your own fear... fear itself, and so fighting it won’t be easy. The vision of your own death will be worse than inhaling a dead witch’s poisonous fart. I’ve had a couple of bad trips, but I wasn’t facing death, so I know your trip on acid is going to be a real mean bitch.” George lectured.

Turning around he briefly starred at Matt, as Matt nodded, yet neither Matt nor I fully understand what George was talking about. At this point, I was almost

clueless. Still, what George had said had made of weird sense.

The universe and it's countless mysteries is the very essence of mystery.

The Hollow Life by Bill M. Orye

The LSD thing, where Matt would have to fight a monster, sounded crazy, but Matt and I were only sixteen years old, and neither of us had done acid. George was much older, at the ripe old age of twenty-one. Still, where the physicians had only offered death, at least George offered what seemed like hope. Besides George's description sounded mysterious. *What does Matt have to lose?* Both Matt and I desperately wanted to believe in what George was saying. George saw the possibility of survival, where everyone else saw only death. Ergo, Matt and I acquiesced to George's peculiar LSD idea. Furthermore, as young guys we always craved adventure. *What's one dead witch's fart, anyway?*

Back then, several of my friends had done acid, yet no one had mentioned that it had healing properties. Of all the people that I've known, who've done acid,

only George had any lasting mental aberration; but as mentioned, schizophrenia ran in his family's DNA. Through the years, I've noticed that many people, who did acid or smoked too much weed, developed an over inflated self opinion, concerning their drug-induced insights, as if they are the only person capable of profound reasoning and creative thought. That common pathology probably has a lot to do with why kush smokers tend to only associate with other kush smokers, believing that only other ganja smokers' perceptions and attitudes are insightful. As a weed smoker, I don't think I was like that, for I was glad to get good information from any source. I gave-up weed smoking, because I got sick of being stupid. When stoned, I sometimes did feel that certain of my thoughts were profound, but they usually appeared to be rather shallow when examined with a clear unstoned mind. Weed is for enhanced enjoyment of sex, music, and food, not for enhanced cognition (logical analysis), nor is it and good for inventiveness, on the other hand there have been a few significant discoveries made on acid, although there's a good chance those few people would have made the discovery without the drug.

<https://www.thrillist.com/culture/8-discoveries-that-were-made-while-on-drugs>

The next afternoon, the three of us began preparing for George's proposed LSD experiment. At George's instruction, we walked into the nearby Northern Virginia woods, which was then roughly 1000 acres situated between Franconia Road and our housing area. There, we began to gather firewood, mostly old dried-out broken branches, which had fallen to the forest floor. For an hour, we'd dragged the dead wood into the center of a large clearing, about eighty feet by one hundred feet in size, and as mentioned, roughly a half mile from our neighborhood. We managed to amass an impressive pile of wood. Later that night, we'd come back to light-off the bonfire. After arranging the wood, we abandoned the clearing, walked the path back to my house, and sat in my basement, and watched TV, played pool, and threw darts, just waiting for nightfall, so we could begin George's great LSD healing experiment.

After most of the neighborhood was fast asleep, following our probing flashlight beams, the three of us made our way back up the path to the clearing, and our pile of firewood. Matt sat about ten feet from

the edge of the pile, and George put the tab of windowpane acid (LSD) on Matt's tongue, and told him to close his mouth, allow it melt, and his mouth fill with saliva, then swallow it. As it turned-out, it would take about forty-five minutes, before the acid kicked in.

We'd purchased the windowpane, at two dollars per hit, from the same aforementioned old biker, that we'd usually buy weed from. In those days, and possibly today as well, bikers ran a lot of the local dope trade. Biker gangs came in many flavors, from being fairly safe and friendly guys, who just liked to ride motorcycles, to men who were dangerous as a streak of hungry tigers with rabies. Some men gather for shared good will and camaraderie, while others convene to share in the profits of the drug trade and the corresponding violence. At certain times in my life, I've been close friends, with men of both varieties.

In the clearing, George lit the bonfire, and Matt just sat a few feet back from the wood pile, waiting for the onset of the acid trip, and the appearance of the aforementioned deadly monster, which George claimed was in some way, Matt's neuroblastoma. One last time, George had made it clear that Matt would

have to confront some impending bad-ass creature, something extremely unpleasant, and Matt would have to physically fight and defeat it... kill it... whatever it was. George kept insisting that said vision was going to be the worst thing imaginable. Leaving Matt sitting just a few feet away from the growing bonfire, George and I exited the clearing, and headed back down the trail towards our neighborhood, but half way there, George indicated that we should take another trail, going uphill, leading up to a field, which was just behind a local elementary school, overlooking the clearing, where Matt was sitting next to the bonfire, with his back to us. Thus, George and I kept an eye on Matt, without his being the wiser. The bonfire brilliantly illuminated the clearing and Matt, just patiently seated on the ground and gazing at the crackling fire.

About forty-five minutes after he'd actually dropped the acid, and the fire had burned down by roughly half, Matt abruptly appeared to notice something off to his left, on the edge of the clearing. Swiftly, Matt jumped to his feet, and began screaming and running, around and around the fire, while he'd periodically glance behind himself, as if he were

being chased by something that was horrifying. *This can't be good for Matt's compromised heart!* His running around the clearing lasted for about fifteen seconds, then, in a full blown panic, he exited the clearing, and began running down the path toward our homes, still screaming like a madman. *He's lost his mind!* Obviously, Matt thought something dreadful was close on his heels, but of course there was nothing really chasing him, at least nothing which George or I could see. It was plainly a horrifying hallucination, an imaginary ten on the Richter Scale. It was then, I noticed a smile on George's face.

As Matt ran away from the clearing, down the dirt path toward our homes. George and I became alarmed, by his violent screaming, concerned that he would awaken our parents, and then they might get wind of our LSD experiment, so George and I sprinted downhill to intercept Matt before he could near our housing area. We physically tackled Matt, then struggled with him to calm him down, which turned out to be no easy task. Matt was fully convinced that we all were about to be killed by whatever it was he thought was chasing him. He violently insisted that what he'd hallucinated was

real and deadly, and that it would come charging down the path, and attack us at any second. Matt was so adamant about the danger of what was chasing him, that we had agree to vacate the woods, and we did so via another trail, to avoid our neighborhood. For quite a while, there was no getting Matt to calm down. We ended-up coming out of the woods, into an abandoned cul-de-sac, where the houses had not yet been built, just the roads, and the empty lots, so we didn't have to worry about anyone hearing Matt's screaming.

Matt was shaking like a leaf, raving about some wild evil hairy beast, a ferocious fifteen foot tall 'demon bear,' wheedling giant sharp teeth and claws, with fiendish glowing red eyes. Matt thought his back was bleeding, where the monstrous bear had clawed him. He repeatedly insisted that George look at his bleeding back, but of course, his back was fine. Perhaps, a tree branch had scratched his back, when he was running in the dark. Standing in the vacant cul-de-sac, it took George and I at least two hours to get Matt to completely calm down, an intense exhausting process, primarily owing to the fact that George, had agreed with Matt that the devil bear was indeed real, and not a hallucination. *George wants*

Matt to believe that the bear is real! Hence, Matt remained convinced that the bears was about to pop out of the woods at any second.

Where Matt had seemed fearless in facing the terminal diagnosis of the cancerous neuroblastoma, the bear had succeeded in completely unnerving him. Indeed, the hallucinogenic bear appeared to be more fearsome, than actual death by tumor. George had been right, about the terror of the hallucination. Matt was unafraid of the neuroblastoma-induced death, but terrified about being ripped to shreds by the imaginary devil bear! *This is crazy!*

Later, sitting in the car, at a nearby late night burger drive-in, Matt kept looking around, still expecting the bear to attack. The burgers and french fries helped Matt to relax. George and I had to keep-up a steady stream of comforting and convincing talk about the fact that the bear was temporarily gone, and only lived in the woods, never coming out, and that the bear doesn't exist in the daylight. On these things, I followed George's lead, without over playing my hand. It was nearly sunrise, before Matt was okay to be by himself, but by then, we were all worn out.

Later in the basement of my house, after my Dad had gone to work and my Mom had gone to her

cooking class in the district (Washington DC), George explained the significance of the night's hallucination to Matt, that the bear was, in fact, the actual tumor. Nevertheless, George refused to say that the monstrous bear was only a hallucination, even though he certainly knew it was strictly imagined! As stated, George fully agreed with Matt that the bear was the real thing, wanting Matt to believe the deadly reality of the imaginary bear. George had kept confirming that the bear had in fact been real, and that he too had seen it! Therefore, I too had to claim that I'd also seen, 'something big and hairy.' George wanted Matt to believe that the bear was real, and that he (Matt) needed to kill it!

“The bear is real as you and I, but it just lives in another realm, Matt. A realm you can only get to with acid, or mescaline, or mushrooms, or maybe a fifty milligram dose of meth... two black beauties. Indians call that realm the spirit world. That fifteen foot monster bear is your fucking tumor, Matt. So, it's the bear that's literally killing you! There's no difference between the bear and the tumor... kill the bear and you kill the horrible tumor, it's as simple as that! If you don't kill the bear, you will most surely die, just like all those doctors told you. It's the docs

that have broken your fighting spirit. They've made you settle for death... told you there was no hope! You're going to have to get your shit together, brother. You'll need to work-up every fiber of courage you've got, and kill the God damned red eyed monster bear. It is death itself... your death! Healing means that you have to fight against death, not just accept your death, and die bravely, like you've been doing. It's sure a good thing for you, that I got out of the psych ward, when I did, before it's too late!" George advised.

"Screw that George. There's no fucking way that I can kill that big crazy-ass bear. I can't kill something like that! You don't realize how dangerous that fucking thing is. He's fucking terrifying! *I've never seen Matt afraid before, and he's really afraid!* I'm just not that brave, George. I can't deal with that monster." The completely frightened, Matt insisted.

Unlike his brother, Matt had never before tripped on acid. Since the first trip had been more than slightly daunting, for the next several days, Matt refused to consider doing another hit of LSD. But George kept working on him, trying to persuade Matt to once again drop acid, and to face the scary bear, to work-up the courage to fight it, and hopefully kill the

illusionary menace, existing in some supernatural dimension. In reality, it is some subconscious (normally active during the dream state) portions of the hippocampi and the amygdala, inducing fear and stimulating the lateral geniculate bodies, whose neurons then activate cells in the visual cortex to create visual imaginary (hallucinations/dreams).

“Matt, listen to me; killing that bear is your only hope. Sure death is scary, but the question is... how bad do you want to live? You can do this, you’ve just got to get your shit together! If you want to live, then you’ve got to kill what’s killing you... kill the fucking bear. Matt! You can do it. Suck it up, and kill that mother fucker! Kill it, Matt! Kill that God awful tumor! The bear is no scarier, than the tumor. Both are your death. You just don’t see the tumor, so it slowly kills you, and you gradually accept your death, but with the acid, you can see the bear; you can see what’s causing your death, face-to-face, and so you can kill it, before it kills you. You’ve just gotta try, man!” Once again, George delivered the last two sentences with his right index finger pointed skyward, and almost with the staccato emphatic vocal phrasing, used by too many southern black Baptist preachers, when speaking about sin and

eternal damnation.

To save the reader a lot of rhetoric, every Saturday night, over the next five weeks, Matt, George, and I, repeated the above-mentioned LSD-bear experiment five more times. Each of the six times, was pretty much the same; Matt in a panic running and yelling, and the three of us running to the dark undeveloped cul-de-sac, then later, going to get some food. Each event was time consuming and exhausting for Matt.

Each day before Matt would drop the acid, George and I would gather the firewood and pile it up in the center of the clearing for the evening bonfire. For additional wood, we'd sometimes pilfer scraps of wood from the trash piles of nearby construction sites. In those days, wood was so cheap that construction crews, often threw away tremendous amounts of surplus building materials, which today would be salvaged and used. Back then, there were stories of construction workers, who had built their own homes, completely out of such scraps: unused bags of concrete and mortar, as well as partial boxes of nails, pieces of pipe to be rethreaded, leftover wiring, scrap molding, discarded bricks and cinderblocks, etc. Through the last few years, America's scrap lumber probably represents a forest

large enough to cover surface of the sun.

America's twenty-first century motto... 'Why waste a wasteful crisis?'

While There's Still A Breath to Take by Mötley

R. Wills

After each bad trip, George would then spend the next five or six days, trying to convince Matt that he still needed to confront and conquer the vicious red eyed bear. However, after the second trip, George found an effective way to reduce the LSD-induced terrors. Once out of the woods, George simply gave Matt twenty milligrams (two ten milligram tablets) of valium, to bring him down off the horrific LSD-bear trip. The valium took about thirty or forty minutes to kick-in, but it worked like a miracle. This made the post-trip terrors easier for Matt to deal with. But the valium would begin to work, Matt's fear of the bear, was throughly unmanageable. That was something worth remembering, you LSD fans... that after a few minutes, valium will stop a bad LSD trip, dead in its' tracks. As the valium lessened Matt's fears, we'd get him some food, then Matt would go home for some

shut-eye. George had stolen the valium from their mother, who had received the prescription, right after Matt had gotten the terminal diagnosis. Once Matt had been given the terminal prognosis, Matt's mom had become a major basket-case. She pretty-much stayed doped-up, and so she never missed the pills, that George stole from her. I'd keep her busy, distracting her with some nebulous conversation, while George raided her pill bottle, on her bedside table.

Throughout those six terrifying LSD experiences, George continued to insist that the LSD method would work, if only Matt would 'get his shit together,' and fight the hellish imaginative bear. George must have ordered Matt to kill the bear a thousand times. The problem with these LSD experiments was that they were deconstructing Matt's fine outgoing personality. Matt had become fairly weird, if not, slightly unstable. Most LSD users don't do it every weekend. Matt had detached from the neighborhood people, who dearly loved him. Matt no longer possessed his charming outgoing personality. He tried to be his old friendly self, but seemed to be becoming more suspicious/paranoid.

Everyone in the neighborhood had noticed and

commented on the marked change in Matt, but they assumed the change was owing to the stress of his impending death. Sometimes, Matt would turn his head and look around, as if he was listening to distant voices. At times, he'd be in the middle of a conversation, give the person an odd look, then simply turn and walk away. Every now and then, he'd say something slightly unkind, which was nothing like his former self. Six bad acid trips, over a six week period, was a mind-bending experience, especially since each trip was spent in a state of complete and utter dread, running from a colossal killer bear. I had begun to feel as if what George and I were doing was actually evil. We were plainly screwing-up Matt's head; gradually driving him insane. Each morning, I'd awaken and recall Matt's previous fearful plight with the hallucinogen bear, his screams, and his corresponding weird personality transformation. Sadly, I'd recall how George and I lied to Matt about also seeing the bear. This was probably the only time I felt a pang of conscience, before age forty. On the other hand, it may not have been conscience, but just a desire for the experiment to hurry-up and work, for maybe it was concern that the neighbors would find-out what we were doing.

Before we started the LSD experiment, Matt had been an amazingly good and kind person, a cheerful caring individual, a highly admired man, who was totally prepared to face his death. But with our weird psycho-chemical meddling, Matt had become different and completely unfamiliar; worse yet, the fear of the bear hadn't seemed to have lessened, but rather it slightly intensified. Matt's psychological condition was fast crumbling. Using this apparently antithetical approach, George and I were destroying the personality of the finest person, I'd known. The weekly LSD ritual was filling me with discomfort, the type of which I was unaccustomed to.

By the same token, I realized the LSD thing was Matt's only hope for survival, and George remained apparently sane and firmly convinced the LSD would work. That situation was something of a macabre catch twenty-two, and forced me to wonder, if it was really so important that Matt live longer; after all, the sixteen years he had lived, he'd lived in an impeccable fashion. Is living longer that important? What's another sixty or so years actually worth, if your brains have been scrambled? What would I want for myself? Sixteen great years, or sixteen great years, followed by sixty additional insane years,

where people only remembered me for my insanity?
What is the true value of life? Mom would say, it's
making sure that you get to heaven... the great
selfish paradox.

At that point, it seemed to me that George's 'LSD
cancer-healing' technique was clearly not working; in
fact, it was clearly making things worse! The day
after the sixth unsuccessful nightmare of an acid trip,
George and I were walking around in the woods,
looking for more available firewood, and talking
about the last failed LSD attempt. Matt was still
sleeping, thanks to the two ten milligram tabs of
valium. After coming off a bad acid trip, the 20
milligrams of valium would make Matt sleep for
about sixteen hours. Oddly enough, George actually
felt that progress was being made, and that Matt was
coming closer to confronting the bear, but I didn't
see it that way. George and I momentarily stopped
on the path, leading-up to the clearing, discussing
how best to proceed.

“He had me down

But I put up a fight

I saw those teeth

And I groped for my knife
Big brown bear
With the juice from his mouth
He could taste my leg
And he thought he'd got me
But I am eating the bear
He lurked around
"Cause he knew where I lived
I'm in the jungle
and he means to eat me
He means to eat me
He's a hungry bear
He touched my arm
And he thought he'd got me
But I am eating the bear
Some days the bear will eat you
Some days you'll eat the bear..."

Taken from the lyrics of *Eating the Bear* by Joan
Armatrading

“Look George, this thing we’re doing to Matt, it’s just not working-out very well. He’s becoming crazy. Sometimes, I think that all we’re doing is fucking-up the time Matt has left on earth. This is supposed to be the part of his life, where he’s making his goodbyes to his family and friends. Instead, he’s now acting more and more like some space alien, and this is how people are going to remember him, like a fucked-up version of his former self. You know George, maybe we’re only making him nuts, and not helping him get rid of the neuroblastoma. He’s getting to be pretty fucking bizarre, and will probably end-up in that same psych ward, you were in, where he’ll die anyway, because of the fucking tumor. Are you still sure this acid thing is gonna work, George? I’m not too sure about this shit, anymore!” *Being desperate makes me cuss more.*

At that point, I felt errant for participating in the great LSD experiment, and I was somewhat angry with George. Common sense was telling me that taking advice from a certified schizophrenic was idiotic. Still, where there is hope there may be life. At least that was what my sixteen year-old mind was advising me, and George was the only person

serving-up any kind of hope; certainly not the doctors, nor our parents. They only offered sympathy and death.

“Look Joey, I hear you, but I guarantee this’ll work, if Matt just gets his shit together and attacks the fucking bear. That’s all it takes to make this thing work. We’ve gone too far to stop now. He’s just got to find his courage and attack the fuck’n bear. Almost any sincere attack will work! Once he attacks, he’ll automatically continue the attack and kill the bear. It’s like swimming over the waterfall, once you swim with the current, it happens. You’ve got to help me sell this, to him! It’s just a trick of the mind. He can’t continue to be content to let the fucking tumor grow and kill him, and before we started this shit, that was all Matt was doing. He was just content to politely die. The fact that Matt has continued to drop the acid and make himself see the bear, says he’s slowly getting there. He hasn’t given-up. Before, Matt was just fixing to die, like the friendly guy he is. The friendly doctors told him to go home and die... just go home and die... no hope! What was really crazy about Matt, was that when we first started this, he seemed to enjoy the idea of dying. He was just content to die, but the fact that he’s still doing the

acid, and allowing the bear to materialize, means he's now changing his mindset about dying.

Everybody seems to admire his courage about facing death with a smile, but he wasn't facing death, he was just accepting his death. There's a big fuck'n difference, Joey! Now, I'm trying to make him fight for his life, and it's tough. He's got to fight the bear! It's his trip, his tumor, and he just needs to realize, that it is time to fight, before he ends-up nuts like me!"

"How do you know this thing will work? Have you ever seen it work for some other sick person, where they drop acid and fight their death monster, and then actually live? This is the first time I've heard of this crap, George." I asked.

"No, I haven't actually seen it work, but I've done enough acid to know it will work. *Really?* It's sort of obvious when you think about it! I know that doesn't sound too convincing, to a young logical dude like you, Joey, but it's true. Besides, I've known a lot of bikers, who have claimed this kind of thing works, except they usually used a shitload of crystal meth, to make them trip; instead of dropping LSD. *This isn't exactly the best proof that this LSD thing is going to work!* I once knew this biker, who beat cancer by

taking a ton of crystal meth, tripping like a mad man, and beating his dead father to death, instead of a bear. A tripping person's death can take different forms, but it's all about confronting and fighting what's killing you; it's all just a fucking mind trick. Even though it's difficult to fight your death, it's simple to understand that this will actually work, if you've done enough drugs. *Of course!*" George explained.

"Maybe, the stress of biker's deceased dad had probably stressed him out to the max as a child, and so set him up for the cancer. Some people say that stress can cause cancer. When he was fighting his 'spirit dad,' the biker had finally punched and knocked-out his hallucinogenic dad, right there in his trailer. The biker then torched his own trailer to make sure his 'vision dad' was dead. First, he'd locked the trailer, with a paddle lock on the door, then he used an ax to chop a hole in its' roof, poured in a five gallon can of gas, then dropped in a match, right before he jumped off the roof. He beat cancer, but lost everything he owned. Joey, tripping is just tripping, and the acid will work just fine. Mescaline would work, too. You just have to find a way to get to the other side, whether its meth, acid, mushrooms,

peyote, whatever. Besides, what is there to lose, Joey? Fucking up Matt's last few weeks is nothing compared to saving his life, and he's not going to end-up in the psych ward, like me."

"You sure, Matt isn't going crazy?" I asked.

"He may go a little nuts, but it'll just be for a while. Matt'll be okay, if he just fights the bear. The courage and the goodness in my brother is powerful, stronger than in me, and it'll always be there, just maybe a little harder to see. So what if he's not as friendly? The important thing is that he does battle with the fucking bear, kills it, and beats that nasty-ass neuroblastoma." George insisted.

"If you say so, George..." *We've gone this far...*

And so, it was the entire knowledge base of the *American Medical Association*, versus George, the schizophrenic doper, as well as the cancer-surviving biker meth-head, who'd burned down his own trailer. George continued to insist that the LSD experiment would work. The manner in which he spoke those words, instilled hope in my sixteen-year-old mind. He believed in what he was saying, and it didn't seem like it was the crazy part of him talking. That day, standing on the path in the woods, George came-up

with an unexpected idea.

“Maybe we could give Matt some kind of weapon. You know, something to help him fight the tumor bear. Something to just get him started, attacking the bear.” George suggested. *I hope George isn’t about to suggest giving Matt a gun!*

I could just hear myself trying to explain the LSD experiment to my military Dad, right after Matt had shot and killed someone in our neighborhood, or shot George or me, thinking that the victim had been the hallucinogen bear. Still, I did think it wasn’t a completely bad idea.

You see Dad, Matt didn’t really mean to shoot that person. He just mistook them for a dangerous hallucinogenic bear, because George gave him some LSD, as a therapeutic treatment to help him get rid of his deadly neuroblastoma, and we gave him the gun just to help him fight the bear. After all, George said that a biker meth-head had once beat cancer by tripping and burning his trailer down. It sounded like a great idea, Dad!

Nonetheless, as George suggested giving Matt some kind of weapon, I was looking over George’s shoulder, further into the woods. A few yards past

him, I spotted a thick woody vine, covered with some stringy brown bark. Seeing the heavy vine felt like a “eureka (Archimedes)” moment. A small epiphany occurred, simultaneous with George’s suggestion, and my spotting the woody vine. George and I walked to my house, borrowed one of my Dad’s handsaws, returned to the woods, and we cut-out a six foot length of said vine. This straight staff was about two inches thick, inflexible, and hard as a rock. This wasn’t your usual flimsy vine. This stiff vine possessed a twisted somewhat corrugated surface, which made for a good grip, and so it appeared that it would make an excellent fighting staff... *shades of Robin Hood and Friar Tuck. This is the perfect weapon!* With a wooden staff, there was no need to worry about Matt stabbing or shooting someone. The worst he’d do was to smack someone with it.

We took the section of the thick vine back to my Dad’s shop, where we used his old leather handled *Ka-bar* survival knife to scrapped-off the stringy bark, then we lightly sanded it, and painted the wooden stave with a couple of coats of bright white day-glow phosphorescent paint, which we’d bought at a hobby shop. Once the paint was thoroughly dry, George and I carried the newly made fighting stave up the path,

leading to the clearing, and carefully hid it, along with a flashlight, under some thick ground cover, just off the trail.

That Saturday evening, Matt was once again seated beside the raging bonfire, having consumed the powerful hallucinogen, and was waiting for the bear to make its dreaded appearance. But this time, instead of watching Matt, by hanging-out up in the field behind the school, George and I waited for him on the dark footpath, where we'd hidden the day-glow staff and flashlight, the same path which Matt always came running down, when fleeing from the terrifying illusionary bear. We were waiting about two hundred yards down from the clearing.

After the fire was lit, George and I left and just sat on the trail waiting for our eyes to adjust to the grayish moonlight filtering down through the trees, listening for Matt to commence his yelling and screaming, and to come crashing down the path toward us. We waited there, for something over a half hour, before we heard Matt begin to shriek, as if death had set upon him, and as usual, we heard him running down the path, fleeing the terrifying imaginary bear, headed for us.

He was sprinting wide-open, running for his life,

with the invisible bear apparently hot on his heels. With Matt's first scream, I began shining the flashlight up and down the length of the homemade vine-staff. The day-glow paint instantly took on an eerie white glow, giving it something of a mystical appearance. Turning off the flashlight, I immediately passed the weird luminescent weapon to George, who assumed a bracing stance, with one of his feet firmly dug-in the path, behind himself. He had positioned the glowing staff across his body, to block Matt's headlong retreat from the bear. Within a few seconds, we could hear Matt running and screaming, only yards from us. He was racing down the path, with the horrifying hallucinatory, fifteen foot tall, red eyed, bear, in deadly pursuit. Once we saw Matt, both George and I were screaming for him to take the staff and to do battle with the bear, but Matt wasn't listening, and without slowing his sprint, Matt plowed straight into George. Both brothers went down hard, tumbling onto the dirt trail. Nonetheless, George was well prepared for the collision and quickly recovered his feet. As they both stood-up, George shoved the staff across Matt's midsection, and into Matt's hands, while I screamed a desperate appeal.

“Matt, take the fucking magical staff. With that staff you can beat anything! You can kill the fucking bear, Matt! Kill it now, before it kills all three of us! Please, don’t let me die, Matt! Save me! Help me, man! Kill that thing now, before we all die! Kill the fuck’n bear, Matt! Use that magic staff! Do it!” I bellowed these commands.

That situation where I was united with my friends, against a common foe, reminded me of the shark in the fish traps, when I’d been a young child in Spain. Suddenly seizing the six foot glowing stave, Matt turned and brandished the weapon, thrusting it forth, at the non-apparent deadly creature. Powerfully and repeatedly, he jabbed the weapon forward, then he began to wield it in large circles, repeatedly swinging, ramming, and clubbing the menacing psychedelic predator. All the while, he was screaming, but now his screams were aggressive, not fearful. At one level, Matt’s efforts appeared somewhat comical, but what I was witnessing was a man finding his courage, and desperately fighting for his life. Matt also felt that he was fighting for George’s and me, against the deadly adversary. There was nothing funny about that. The clear realization of Matt’s courage made the hairs stand-up on my

arm. He was finally going up against what, for him, had been an impossible adversary.

Matt's performance, although bogus in the world of conscious reality, was nothing short of heroic. At one time, the fear of the bear had laid waste to his psyche, but that night, Matt drove the bear back up the path, swinging and stabbing, attacking the lethal carnivore, with our glowing magical staff. Matt began to curse at the bear. The incandescent fast moving staff looked amazing in the dark woods. The homemade luminescent weapon left swirling white fan-like trails of light, as Matt drove the hallucinogenic monster back up the dirt path, toward the clearing. Matt wheeled the weapon, as if he'd come out of the womb with it. Every so often, Matt would duck or jump, probably dodging the bear's lethal claws. The trails of light from the magical staff, allowed me to see just how amazingly fast the athletic Matt was moving. He was charged by adrenaline, LSD, the desire to defeat his death, and finally, with the courage to save all our lives. And just for a tiny fraction of a second, there was a brief freeze frame, I thought I too saw the huge deadly creature, and that's when I again screamed out, just as my childhood friend had screamed-out that day at

the fish traps, when the shark was coming.

“That’s it, Matt! Kill it, Matt! Kill that fucking monster bear! You’re doing it, man! Nail him in the head! You got him, Matt!” I yelled from behind him, as George and I walked up the path slowly following Matt.

“You’ve got him, Matt! Don’t stop, till he’s fucking dead! Kill him!” George screamed his encouragement.

George and I repeatedly screamed the words of inspiration, over and over, as we followed him up the path, toward the clearing, where the bonfire was still burning. Matt continued to yell, and gradually his yells became more aggressive, and less fearful. Matt threaten the beast, promising it death. He continued to pursue the monster into the lighted clearing, and then off he went into the dark woods, on the other side, where there was no path. He continued screaming, while swinging and thrusting the glowing weapon, into the body of the beast, while plowing around in the darkness. George and I waited by the bonfire, while Matt kept shouting and banging around in the woods, apparently still seeing and attacking the illusionary bear; after all, hallucinations are most vivid in the dark, at least

mine have always been.

“What happens now, George? Matt’s killing the bear.” I whispered.

“He lives, that’s what fucking happens, Joey. It’s what I’ve been telling you guys all this time. You see, Matt now really deserves his life. He’s out there in these dark woods, killing his death. He’s at last developed the mind-set of a spirit warrior. Before, he was like an old man, who was ready for the end. He’s always had strength and speed, and now he’s found his courage. He’ll be a different man from here on out, but he’ll be alive... no more little boy, no more ultra friendly nice guy, but most importantly, no more neuroblastoma. He’ll still be a good and brave man, just not the happy-go-lucky lovable neighborhood kid!”

Matt fought like a man possessed. Yelling and banging around in the dark, he seemed like a young insane, *Don Quixote*; however, his windmill-giant was the imaginary bear. I wondered if the acid allowed Matt to see in the dark, for he was without a flashlight. In the dark woods, I’d barely been able to see anything, but Matt seemed to be doing fine, thrashing around in the dark.

You have taken the strength from henbane, with which
ungrateful love drowns my painful virtue.

Miguel de Cervantes

Henbane is usually used to treat digestive issues, but too much has been known to cause: hallucinations, delirium, manic episodes, and even death. It's all about the dosage. Matt's LSD-induced hallucination must have been powerful indeed. After about two minutes of crashing around, in the woods, Matt returned to the bonfire, with the enchanted homemade six foot staff still tightly clutched in his hands. George and I had elected to wait there. Matt was drenched in sweat, breathing hard, but with a broad smile across his scratched-up face. Matt believed that many of the bloody scratches on his face and arms were where the bear had clawed him. George and I immediately agreed with him, even though he'd only been scratched by the tree branches. Matt insisted that George and I come see the dead bear, but George flatly refused.

"If you want, we'll go look Matt, but that type of bear, once dead, won't be there. Once that kind of bear dies it simply vanishes, like a bad dream you've finally woken-up from. The bear is gone just like your tumor is now gone. It'll just fade away, now.

You've beaten it! Congratulations little brother! At this point, the bear is no longer an issue. You've done it dear brother. You've killed your own death! Time to live! Let's just go find some whiskey, and get drunk. We need to get drunk, find some girls, and get back to the realm of the living... no more dying Matt. Besides, the whiskey will help you come down off the acid... no more of mom's valium for you. You've at last had a good trip, and you now can begin to feel yourself healing!"

George made that statement with a fairly calm convincing finality. He looked like some kind of regale king as he had that declaration. It was so convincing that Matt instantly believed George, and seemed to relax. Oddly enough, I realized that George had been right all along. For some reason, I knew that Matt would then survive the cancer. There just had to be some kind of reward, for all that poor Matt had gone through.

"Yeah, you're right. I don't need the valium, George. I will live, now." Matt declared.

"You'll live to be a wise old man, with too many kids. But tonight will always be the most exciting time in your life! You'll be a great dad, one day, Matt." George accurately spoke.

George had stated this with absolute assurance, and probably with the same level of confidence which the doctors had told Matt that he would surely die. As crazy as George was, he possessed a bizarre kind of sagacity, an intuitive and spiritual insight. And now, like me, Matt is an old man, with too many kids and grandkids. The doctors all said that the disappearance of the neuroblastoma was simply a spontaneous remission, as if those two words explained everything. Who honestly knows? Nevertheless, I like to think that Matt was saved by the crazy LSD experiment. I don't know whatever became of George.

Perhaps, when a person is told they are going to die, fear begins to grow, and the fear causes the *Zona Fasciculata* of the adrenal gland's cortex to begin to release large amounts of cortisol, which suppresses the victim's immune system, and so their cancer or their infection accelerates. Also, since cortisol blocks protein synthesis, and every cell in the body needs to make proteins, the entire body begins to age. The sufferer may still be able to put on a brave face, a facade of sorts; however, that doesn't mean that he or she still isn't suffering the fear, and may still be producing and releasing huge amounts of cortisol. It

only means that outwardly, their behavior appears to be brave, but by confronting and fighting their death, perchance they may actually conquer their fear and therefore they actually stop the release of cortisol, ergo their immune system is better allowed to function.

Though I've never consumed LSD, I still feel the need to say, 'thank you' to Albert Hoffman for his wonderfully strange discovery. So many medical discoveries have been made serendipitously. Besides discovering LSD, I believe that Albert was the guy who also isolated, synthesized, and named psilocybin, commonly found in psychedelic mushrooms, which I have taken. LSD has given many people greater awareness, while making a few others insane. One man's pleasure is another's madness.

THOUGHTS

"Thoughts are things, with arrows winged,

Dipped in a poison bowl,

Or born aloft on wings of light,

Sweet nectar to the soul,

Thoughts are things; they fly on wings

To bring you good or ill;
They shape your lives as best they may
Your destiny to fill...”

by Mrs. Camomile

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[OBJ]



DEATH COMES WHILE SLEEPING

For as long as I remember, I've loved swimming, in the ocean. It's not so much the actual act of swimming as it is the environment. When one is immersed in the ocean water, it seems health-giving, and you're suspended in something huge, yet due to your three dimensional movements, you're comfortably surviving. The ocean is an ion bath, filled with countless charged minerals, as well as polarized water molecules, realigning the force fields in the body. And when I get tired of swimming, a towel on the warm beach sand makes a terrific place to relax. As an ocean lifeguard, I'd arrive early to the beach, when there still weren't any swimmers present. I found tranquility by swimming around the pier, or from merely staring-out at the seemingly limitless blue watery expanse. I'd learned to swim, early in life. As a little child, my mother would take me swimming, in the blue waters of the Pacific, when Dad was cruising around on the USS Mount McKinley, General MacArthur's flagship, during the

Korean conflict. Dad was involved in organizing the deadly invasion of Inchon and Mom and I were enjoying the west coast beaches.

Far out in the ocean, my little kid body would be resting between her shoulder blades, I'd hold onto her neck or shoulders, as she'd slowly do the breast stroke. Mom was in great shape, in those days, and would constantly talk to me, in a reassuring fashion as we ventured into the deeper waters of the Pacific. People didn't worry too much about sharks, then. I marveled at how my Mother gracefully moved through the water, and wondered about how far down the sandy bottom was. As a small child, I found it surprising that it was just as easy to swim in deep water as shallow. Mom made me feel that the ocean was fun, my friend, and a peaceful and comforting place. While my dear Mother was filled with lots of unreasonable fears, lucky for me, the ocean wasn't one of them.

“Is the water deep here, Mom?”

“Joey, it's deep, but I don't know how deep. It doesn't matter how deep it is, as long as you can swim. You're going to be a great swimmer, Joey. I can tell.” She replied.

As the years passed, I became a decent swimmer, barely good enough to be on the college swim team, yet never good enough to be a serious competitor. So, it had taken nearly everything I had to qualify to become a beach lifeguard, at Ocean City, Maryland. Each lifeguard candidate was required to pass a three phase qualification test. The first phase of the test involved a few strength and exercise tests: one hundred push-ups, two hundred sit-ups, twenty chin-ups, and then were a couple of timed events: carrying another lifeguard on your back for 200 yards, and a timed 500 yard sprint in deep sand. The second phase was a timed mile ocean swim, against the current. Finally, the third phase was conducted at a pool, and for me, it was that third phase of the test, which was by far the most difficult. The guards had decided to play a trick on me.

I had comfortably passed the first two phases, but I came close to failing the third phase, a somewhat violent 'pool test.' In a manner of speaking, I had to cheat in order to pass it.

That final phase took place in the deep end of a large outdoor hotel swimming pool, before the hotel had opened for the season, and so the water was still extremely cold. Take it from me, it's much more

difficult to be tough and brave in cold water. Perhaps that's why Navy SEAL's Hell Week takes place in cold water. Hell Week is designed to weed-out the candidates before they begin actual SEAL training, and it's something I'd never be able to complete.

At the beginning of this third phase, I was treading water in the deep end of the pool, with my back just six feet from the side of the pool. One of the more 'experienced' guards was supposed to suddenly leap off the concrete pool desk, and land hard onto my back, and immobilize me, by forcefully wrapping-up his arms my neck and chest, and his legs around the my waist and legs, thus I would instantly be forced underwater. I was the supposed to free myself from the experienced guard, to subdue him, and tow him to the side of the pool. It was a purely subjective test, because it was virtually impossible for any lifeguard candidate to escape from an 'experienced' guard, if the guard truly didn't wish to release his hold on the candidate. So the experienced guard was to simply gauge the candidate's effort to free himself, ergo it was up to these experienced guards to decide, if the candidate had put forth sufficient effort. This last phase of testing was designed to determine, if the candidate

could free himself, should a drowning victim, somehow manage to wrap him up, during an actual rescue. Later as a guard, I did in fact get wrapped-up by one of my drowning victims. The struggle to free myself mandated that I first try to get the victim off of me by taking a big breath and going underwater, but instead I panicked and just beat the crap of the victim till he was almost unconscious. It was certainly better than drowning.

During the pool test, the candidate was only allowed two attempts to pass this final 'pool test.' If he failed the second attempt, he was washed-out of the program, and couldn't try-out again, until the next year. If the candidate couldn't get the 'experienced' guard off his back, and was endanger of drowning, he only had to tap on any part of the 'experienced' guard, and he was immediately released, much as a losing competitor can 'tap-out' in televised MMA fights. Prior to 'tapping-out,' the candidate was allowed to do anything to get free, of the experienced guard, so the test was said billed as 'no-holds-barred.'

As luck would have it, when I got into the deep end, with my back to the side of the pool, while treading water and waiting for my pool test to begin,

the guard walked away, and instead, a massive unknown fellow came strutting into the pool area. Later, I'd find out that he wasn't a guard, just a monstrously powerful man, who had been brought-in, to carry-out a practical joke on me. Apparently, it was already decided that I'd allowed to be a guard, regardless of the outcome of that third phase, but I didn't about know that. Instead, I was made to believe that I absolutely had to pass the pool test, only being allowed the aforementioned two attempts. This new huge stranger was there to make sure that I thought that I failed the test. But again, unbeknownst to me, the joke was that if I'd failed to get free of him, I was going to be a guard, anyway. The titanic stranger confidently smirked and nodded at me, from the pool desk as he approached.

“I'll be testing you, today. Turn around, so you don't see me jumping onto your back. I'm gonna make you fail this test.” He sneered this brief sarcastic comment, as he indicatively jammed his right thumb-tip into his sternum, between two huge bulging pectoral muscles. The unknown man was about age twenty-five, a virtual muscular devil of approximately 270 pounds. He was built like a body builder with practically no fat... 270 pounds of bone

and muscle. In a way, his comment didn't really matter, because I assumed his job was simply to let you go, provided you put forth adequate struggle. But there was something disconcerting, about the big man's derisive stare. He twirled his right index finger, indicating for me to face away, so he could leap onto my back. The other experienced guards just stood by, smiled and watched. At the time, I hadn't a clue, who the new guy was, but I wasn't sure that I knew all the regular guards. To this day, I've never learned how he was selected to play this practical joke on me, nor did I learn the giant prankster's name.

As it turned-out, his egotistical sneer was a clear indication of a genuinely bad tempter, the kind which steroids are known to impart. It was highly unlikely that he'd gained his tremendous amount of muscle from simply working out and eating right. *This guy looks like a real mean motherfucker!* At the beginning of the first attempt, I had just turned my back to the side of the pool, when suddenly the powerful behemoth landed on my back, and instantly locked me up, as a powerful python might wrap-up its' prey item. He had landed on me, before I could get a good breath, and his 270 pound body weight

instantly drove me below the surface, and I felt like I was being crushed in steel coils. The powerhouse squeezed so hard and violently, I felt as if my neck and ribs were breaking. Right before I blacked-out, I tapped on the brawny forearm, apparently failing the first of the two prescribed attempts. The hulk let me go, but none too quickly, he held me under for another ten seconds, in flirting considerable pain. It was clear to me that the sadistic guy not only wanted me to fail the test, but wanted to hurt me in the process, and so I realized that I was going to have to do something drastic, if I was going to have any chance of passing the pool test.

The foul giant swam to the side and climbed back out of the pool with a broad hyena smile smeared across his face. The guards were smiling, seeming to enjoy my failure. Needing every advantage I could muster, I purposely began to hyperventilate, to increase the oxygen concentration of my blood. I also took my time turning my back to the side of the pool, thereby giving myself a little more time to recover.

That morning, before the beginning of the final pool test, the 'experienced' guards had drilled into us the fact that the third phase was going to be a tough,

‘no-holds-barred’ test... a ‘completely realistic’ rescue situation. Their last words had been that we should pretend that the pool test was the ‘real thing,’ and to do whatever it took to survive.

“Just pretend that a drowning victim has somehow got a hold of you from behind, and you’re gonna die, if you don’t get free of him. So, do whatever it takes!” The guards had instructed.

Ergo, after failing the first attempt, it was time to go for broke, to pull out all the stops, or go home and tell my Dad that I had failed. True enough, I have often failed in life, and still continue to do so, but I’ve never been one to easily give-up. While I’ll never be what the Marines advertise... “Be all you can be,” I still do hate to fail.

On the second attempt, I barely heard the colossal brute hop off the side of the pool, so I’d tucked my chin to protect my throat, and completely filled my lungs, tightened my abdominal and chest muscles, just before the fiend landed on me. I used his momentum, and an upward thrust of my arms, to take him to straight the bottom of the pool. Though I wasn’t nearly as strong as the big man, we were both bone and muscle, without any fat, and so we both sank like stones.

There was no point to my expending any energy to try to keep us afloat. At that moment, I just planned on running him out of air, since trying to out muscle the giant seemed unlikely. In those days, I could hold my breath, what was then considered a long time, nearly three minutes. The world record, without supplemental oxygen, is now over ten minutes. Nonetheless, once on the bottom, considering the pressure his arms and legs were generating on my body, I quickly realized that the guy was too strong to think about prying loose. He was plainly determined to fail me. It was futile to try to deal with his immense strength. The scissor hold his legs had around my waist was definitely painful; he was doing his level best to hurt me. He made several attempts to get his forearm under my chin and get a stranglehold on my neck, but instead, with my chin down in my chest his forearm remained firmly across my mouth. It was clear, I'd just be wasting oxygen to wrestle with him. So I just conserved my air and remained motionless, realizing that my only hope was to run us both out of air, and hope that in the end I was still conscious. During our time on the bottom of the pool, he was using-up lots of oxygen trying to hurt me, but I simply held my position, protected my throat, relaxed as much as

was possible, and waited.

After a couple of minutes, I felt the desperate struggle to breathe beginning, but I continued to try to calm myself, and delay, till I felt the beginnings of dizziness, and so I knew the giant must be short on air, as well. His larger muscle mass demanded more oxygen, yet his brain was no larger than mine, hence I had some advantage. After a few more seconds, I heard him making swallowing sounds, indicating he was becoming desperate for air, and a second later, I felt his grip on me slightly loosen, and the pressure of his forearm pressing down on my mouth lessened, so I figured it was time to go for broke, but I realized that even if I got loose, I'd still have to subdue him on the surface, and tow him to the side of the pool. Right then, it seemed impossible.

Acting on the fact that I'd been told to behave as if the pool test was the real thing, and that the test was 'no holds barred,' I opened my mouth, got a huge mouthful of his forearm muscle, and sank my teeth deep in. It was much like biting into a thick steak. There was a small 'pop' sound, corresponding to my teeth pierced through his skin and fascia. It felt something like biting through the casing of a sausage. It seemed that my teeth had effortlessly

sunk deep into the muscle. Mercifully, I ignored the instinctive reflex to pull my head back, and bite free a chunk of forearm. There was a corresponding violent sudden shift in the giant's position on my back. His squeeze suddenly went totally slack, indicating that the brawny monster was wanting to be free of me.

At the same time, just behind my head, I could hear the big man explosively exhale his remaining air. He quickly pulled back his injured arm, for underwater inspection, and so I seized that moment to hurriedly pushed hard off the hard pool bottom with both my feet, and at the same time, I turned and used my hands and arms to shove the big man downward and over backward, as I shot for the surface. I wanted to be the one to first take a deep breath. He was no doubt in pain and shocked by the vicious bite. *He's going to be seriously pissed, when he breaks the surface!* Breaking through the surface, I quickly filed my lungs, and began to again hyperventilate to increase my blood oxygen. *I didn't let him break the surface and get a breath.* At the point, I fully intended to render him unconscious; otherwise, there'd be no towing the big man to the side of the pool. Since he was so huge, I plainly

needed to keep him from breathing. Once I broke the surface, I quickly began to hyperventilate to oxygenate my blood and clear my head, as I positioned myself over the underwater image of the man to stop his surfacing. I readied myself for the encounter. This guy was way above my weight class, and possessed the personality of your average deranged hate-filled maniac.

The titan had shoved hard off the bottom, and so looking to break the surface, when I threw myself over the top of his head, and with one hand shoved down on his face, and with the other hand, I pushed down on his cannonball shoulder, to further delay him his getting a breath. Deftly, he shifted his head and upper body to partially negate my effort. Still, I tried to force my body over the top of him, doing my best to keep his head underwater. It was imperative that he be exhausted, before surfacing. Otherwise, there was no way, I'd be able to control him. *He's seriously angry about the bite.* Through the clear water, I caught a brief glimpse of swirling crimson ribbons, emanating from the giant's wounded forearm. *Good thing there's no sharks in the pool.*

My effort to drive him down just partly succeeded, delaying him only for another second or

two. The massive giant's face finally broke the surface. I couldn't quite reach his face, so using the palm of my hand, I shoved a wave of water into his mouth, which choked him as he inhaled. For a fraction of a second, I was pleased that he looked panicked, and was coughing and desperately struggling for air. Being too pleased with myself, I didn't notice his balled-up sledge-hammer fist, as it smashed me square in the nose. Since the punch had come-up from under the water, it had fortunately lost some force. Even so, it was enough to send my head back and partially onto my back.

The shot to my snot-locker was painful, with the classic swirl of black and white dots filling my visual field, and a crimson flow from my nose, but I didn't go out. Floating on my back, blinking and shaking my head, I was trying to clear my vision. Looking down, I saw that his furious red face was sticking out of the water, right next to my right ankle. The lunatic was angrily glaring at me, as he still tried to get a good breath. At that moment, he briefly looked away from me to inspect his injured forearm. That's when I bent my right knee, and heel kicked him, as hard as I could, dead in his nose. Because of fear and adrenaline, I did my best to drive my heel clean

through his face, and out the back of his evil skull. The bottom of my heal, let me feel the bones of his nose breaking. His head flew back, and hulk went totally unconscious, and began to sink to the bottom. *Thank you, God!*

Wasting no time, I dove down grabbed a handful of blond hair, and pulled his head to the surface, which momentarily put me underwater. Once back up, I threw a cross chest carry on him, and hurriedly towed his motionless body the six feet to the side of the pool. Thank goodness, I didn't have to tow him any further. I was exhausted. Because of my heal kick a marked stream of blood was flowing from his nostrils, and because of my bite blood also ran from his forearm. The other guards, who were actually supposed to have administered the test, were watching and obviously worried about the unconscious man. Two of them leaned over the side of the pool to help pull the big fellow up and over the rough concrete pool edge, while I pushed upward on one of his huge thick thighs. They then left him laying on his back, with his lower legs and feet, still hanging down in the water. From the rise and fall of his chest, I could see that he was breathing and no longer choking. Wasting no time, I climbed out of the

pool, to exit the premises, before the fiend awoke. *I've got to get the hell out of here, fast.* As I quick-stepped from the pool area, I called back over my shoulder to the guards.

“You guys said to pretend it was the real deal, so that’s all I did. Sorry, but that asshole was definitely going to fail me, no matter what I did. He about broke my neck! Nobody on the guard team is that big. That guy was no fucking joke! I think he broke some of my ribs, too. I’m outta here. I’ll call the Captain to find out if I passed! Bye!” I had pleaded my case for biting the giant, and breaking his nose, as I left.

None of the guards had answered me. Afraid they were going to fail me for excessive violence, and possibly even call the police, I exited the pool area. In addition, I feared the giant would come looking for me, when he awoke. As I reached the parking lot, and was getting in my car, I heard him bellow.

“That bastard bit me!”

Later that afternoon, I called the *Beach Patrol* office, to see if I’d passed the pool test. The Captain told me I had, then asked me a few questions about what had transpired. He stated that it was more than

unfair, that they'd paired me against such a huge man, who could have played line for *Green Bay*, and had the disposition of a 'choleric badger.' That might have been okay, if only the giant had followed procedures, but he discernibly enjoyed hurting me, and ultimately wanted to injure me, and in the process fail me, at least in my mind. I never learned who put the giant on me, or what the ogre's motive was, other I sensed he liked to hurt people. I barely had managed to pass the pool test to be became a so-so lifeguard; not realizing that I was going to pass, regardless.

I'd made a rather large worrisome enemy in the process. Later, I was told that he had sported two black eyes, and had gone to the local clinic to have his arm cleaned and stitched, then he'd returned to his hometown of Baltimore, to have his nose surgically reconstructed. Several people kept telling me that the colossus was coming back to Ocean City to kick my ass, but oddly enough, while he did return, he never sought revenge. Still, for some time, I thought that if the guy returned, I might have to follow my Dad's advice, about people you can't be reasoned with. I also thought about driving to Baltimore, rather than waiting for him to return,

where he'd have the advantage.

In dealing with a superior armed force, you either retreat, or you seize the element of surprise, with a deadly seriousness.

Under Fire by Lt. General Adrian W.

Morley

The big man was too much for me to deal with, and I was afraid of him; so, for several weeks, I carried a knife almost everywhere I went, while keeping a wary eye out for him. I figured the knife might at least keep him off me... maybe, keep him from breaking my spine, like he'd tried to do in the pool. My ribs and neck hurt for a few weeks, after.

Late one evening, in mid-summer, I was drinking at a boardwalk bar, when I finally saw him come into the bar, and he quickly saw me. He never said a word to me, and I said nothing to him. By the time I saw him in the bar, about six weeks had passed and I had lost a lot of weight, largely due to too much drinking, and extremely unpleasant *PTSD*-type nightmares. The nightmares were owing to the great number of exhausting rescues I'd had to make. When

he and I made eye contact, he momentarily pointed an index finger at me in something of a brief semi-threatening gesture. At first, I thought he meant the gesture as a precursor to an attack. Luckily for me, he only pointed. Perhaps, the fact that I was playing pool, and had reflectively tightened my grip on the pool cue, had maybe that had given him pause. Who knows? I was glad he'd done nothing, still a few minutes later, when he couldn't see me, I left the bar, via the bathroom window, and headed to another bar on the other side of the small city. Luckily, I would never have to lay eyes on the man, again.

The one hundred and ten lifeguards, comprised the *Ocean City Beach Patrol*, guarding a nine mile stretch of sandy Atlantic coastline, tried to protect bad swimmers and few surfers, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., throughout the long hot months of summer. In my day, there was only one designated section of beach used for surfing. Now, there are two, which are rotated as the surfing zones. My first year, I worked at various locations, as a roving guard, and very nearly drowned on one rough rescue, owing to the changing rip currents, the choppy waves, as well as the size of the victim. Both the victim and I barely made it, ergo I came close to quitting that day. I only

survived that rescue, because another guard came out to help me. Had the other guard failed to arrive, I'd have simply allowed the drowning victim to die. Because of a sudden violent wide riptide, the victim had gotten pulled-out far from shore. At the time, I was walking between my stand and the neighboring stand when it had happened. Foolishly, I hadn't taken my torpedo buoy with me, and went after the guy without it... a big mistake! He was a fairly large and lean man, and definitely not a floater. When I got to him he was in a full blown panic and difficult to control.

The second year on the *Beach Patrol*, I was promoted to crew chief, which meant I had nine highly trained and experienced guards under my direct supervision, which was kind of a joke, since all nine of my guards were better swimmers than I. Several of them held state swimming records: Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, California, and Hawaii. It was indeed a privilege to work with such fine men, and to watch those guys smoothly cutting through the waves on a rescue. Back then, we called those ocean rescues, 'pulls.' And, my crew had the most pulls in the US. We guarded the worst section of public beach on the east and west coasts.

Even though I was not nearly the swimmer they were, they knew that I had their best interests at heart. Only once did I have to discipline one of my guards. Conceivably, the reason I got the ill-deserved promotion to ‘crew-chief’ was that I was fairly vigilant, and had a knack for spotting changes in the wave patterns, and alterations in the water color, indicating that sand was being pulled-up off the ocean bottom. Changes in the color and clarity of the water had a way of foretelling when the sandbar was breaking apart, and the corresponding rip current was about to open-up, and suck out some unsuspecting tourists, many of which had questionable swimming ability, into the deeper waters of the Atlantic. These color changes coupled with the wave patterns clued me into riptides and undertows. The undertows were closer to the shore and therefore more dangerous for kids. Basically, a riptide is caused by wind and breaking waves pushing excess water toward the shore, raising the water level along the shore. The excess water has to go somewhere, so it tends to blow-out the weakest portion of the first sandbar, then the outflow blows out the second bar, and so the shore waters rush out, through those breaks, toward deeper waters, and a riptide is born.

If I could see when a rip was about to open, I'd blow my whistle and signal the guards to concentrate on that area, and then we'd try to encourage any beachgoers, who appeared to be poor swimmers, to move to another section of beach... preventative guarding. The quickest way to get to a victim, whose been pulled out into deeper water is to jump into the rip current with them, and to use the outgoing current to speed-up your getting to them.

Other than cluing them into the rip currents, my guards didn't need any supervision. As mentioned, they were more capable swimmers than I. However, there was one problematic guard, whom I had to continually check-up on. He was a great guy, and my only serious complication with the crew. With some outside help, my guards and I managed to give him a fairly unpleasant, if not unforgettable, circadian rhythm adjustment, permanently fixing the danger he posed.

My nine lifeguards and I watched-over what was reputed to be the worst section of beach in America, and that was likely why my nine guards were by far the best swimmers on the entire 110 lifeguard team. Our stretch of beach was the southernmost ten blocks of Ocean City beach front. And those blocks bordered

the part of the city, which garnered the most money... the most crowded area of tourist trade. That dangerous section of beach was allowed to remain open, so that the city could make more money, since it was adjacent to the busiest section of the broad walk: arcades, hotels, restaurants, shopping, bars, etc. This situation of profit vs. safety, was not too different from the Amity Island beach community, in the movie, *Jaws*, except that the riptides were far more dangerous to the safety of the swimmers, than was that one big shark. Besides, that southern section of Ocean City beach also had a major shark population.

The reason it was such a dangerous stretch of beach was because the ocean bottom was frequently shifting, and given to producing the aforementioned riptides and undertows. This treacherous situation was owing to the fact that it was adjacent to a deep inland channel, running perpendicular to the shoreline. A clearer explanation would likely require charts and diagrams, but suffice it to say, that Ocean City is situated at the southern tip of a very long skinny peninsula, paralleling the eastern seaboard, which is so thin it's nearly an island. The southern most end of Ocean City's eastern shore was the

territory, which my crew guarded, where the currents played the most havoc with the ever disintegrating offshore sandbars, forever endangering precarious swimmers. Indeed, those ten blocks of beach were frequently trying to drown the visiting tourists. As if that wasn't bad enough, as I said, we had a marked shark population, and ever since I'd encountered that shark in the fish traps, as a child, I feared these toothy creatures. Still, no one on our section of beach was ever bitten; at least not for the two summers, that I worked.

The second summer proved to be seriously stressful, and so when it was over, I never returned, not even to visit the beach, and it's been over forty five years. Those southern ten blocks of beach, where the city received the bulk of its' tourist dollars, were lifeguarding nightmares, but we all know, that in any bureaucracy, money comes first, and human safety may not even make it into the top ten. If you take exception to that statement, just consider global warming... the whole earth is going down the shitter, so a few greedy folks can get richer. How is that for ridiculous? Or, just consider the lack of curative medicine, since a cure means that the pharmaceutical industries lose money. And then there's war, which is

largely conducted so the military industries can get rich off their military weapons and supplies.

Guarding that precarious ten blocks was one of the most memorable parts of my worthless young life; helping to save lots of people, from those ten blocks from hell, and it made me feel important.

During those three months of that second summer, my nine guards and I averaged over 200 pulls each, or around 2000 pulls for my crew and I, that averaged out to be more than twenty per day, or two each day per guard! But it usually didn't work that way. We'd have several days where nothing would happen, and then one day you spend a large part of the entire day in rough seas, pulling-out too many people, and so often my guards and I would nearly drown in the process, largely due to fatigue. In fact, as mentioned, every so often, one guard would have to rescue another guard. Physical exhaustion was always a problem on such the days, and they contributed to my having debilitating nightmares at night. The job and nightmares caused me to lose weight. At the end of that second summer, I was little but skin and bones, with just enough muscle to still perform the rescues.

One day, I'd had so many rescues, and was so

dog-tired, that I was shaking and vomiting. Adjacent to my stand, was a small six foot creosoted wooden telephone pole, with an old-fashioned red phone-box attached about five feet up the pole. The phone connected me directly to the Captain of the *Beach Patrol*, a truly good and honest man. With my head spinning, my stomach churning, and my body trembling, totally depleted of stamina and strength, I grabbed the phone and told the Beach Captain that I was not going out on another pull; that if another tourist went down, I wouldn't help them.

“...It'll be just too fucking bad, Captain. They'll just have to die! If I go out on one more pull, I'll drown. I got nothing left to give. Bring-in some guys from up north and get them here now, now, now! They don't have shit to do up there, anyway. The surfers don't need a guard. The surfers rescue each other, anyway. If you don't get them here, you'll be reading about some dead tourists in the newspaper tomorrow.” I threatened.

The Captain brought in the relief guards, just in time to rescue more drowning tourists. The relief swimmers made the subsequent rescues for the rest of that miserable day. Miraculously, the kindly Captain never reprimanded me for that call, but I'd

given my all, that day. Later, I learned that he'd come to the my stand that day, probably to reprimand me, but when he arrived, he saw me dry-heaving and shaking with exhaustion. One of my guards had seen him turning away, walking back to get in his jeep to leave. The Captain was a bit of a paradox, in that he liked me, but never said so; for him, it was unmanly to compliment another man. Because of the nightmares and the days with too many rescues, working the southern section of beach was torture. The nightmares were vicious, and normally I was not a person given to bad dreams. The bad dreams made me not want to eat, and so I lost weight. Before then, I used to tell people that I could count my life's bad dreams on one hand. Most of the guards on the southern part of the beach also had such nightmares. While we all agreed about the nightmares, none of us went into details. Discussing such was considered a weakness... unmanly. Many mornings, I see a guard show-up with the proverbial thousand yard stare, due to the dreams the night before.

“You don't look so good this morning. You okay?” I'd ask.

“Bad night!”

“Couldn’t sleep, or something?” I’d ask.

“Something!”

“People drowning?” I’d ask.

“Fuck yes, and I’d drown too!”

“I hate those dreams, man!” I’d say.

My old friend, booze, helped me to get back to sleep and to better deal with the job stresses. After a bad dream, I’d reach under the bed, pull-out the bottle, take a couple of gulps, and try to return to sleep. Nonetheless, if I drank before going to sleep, later in the night, the dreams tended to be stronger... more horrific! While there is only one incident in my life, where I actually blocked-out my memory, many of the events of Ocean City are unclear, perhaps due to the unpleasant nightmares and the corresponding booze. There was one vague incident where a guard friend, Eric McDonald, and I were drinking in a boardwalk bar, during a hurricane. We were half in the bag, when some middle aged guy came busting into the bar, screaming that he’d seen two people get washed off the end of the jetty by a wave, down into the ocean.

During the hurricane, Eric rescued those two drunks, who had been washed-off near the tip end of

a long rock jetty around midnight. My recollection of the event is vague, probably because I was pretty hammered, and I was certainly terrified. Before we dashed out of the bar, Eric asked the unexpected messenger, which side of the rock jetty the two people had been washed-off of. The visitor said they'd gone off the north side, just shy of the end, right by the old fog horn.

In the dark of the stormy night, the giant twenty-five foot jet black waves were practically invisible except for the minor reflects for the city lights, as they'd ruthlessly hammer clean over the large rock jetty. Out at the end of the hundred yard jetty, was erected a little thirty foot small steel tower, with a foghorn on top, originally used to warn ships away. The base of the steel tower was wrapped in rusty chain link fencing. Eric and I carefully fought our way out to the end of the jetty, timing the waves and holding on to the big slippery rocks, as occasionally the huge waves washed over us. The gray and brown boulders ranged in size from the size of a horse to an elephant. Now days, there's a concrete pathway leading out to the fog horn; the night of the storm, we weren't so lucky, as to have a path. Once out at the end, Eric and I hung tightly onto the chain link

fencing. The only light was coming from the aforementioned lights of the city, since miraculously the power was still on. Once out on the end, a huge dark wave was building, like a tsunami, and the water was leaving from the north side of the jetty, when Eric screamed down into the rocks.

https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?p=photo+of+rock+jetty+in+ocean+city+MD&fr=yfp-t&imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fstaticflickr.com%2F4%2F3260%2F5755085335_11e1dc9295_b.jpg#id=68%3A%2F%2Fstaticflickr.com%2F4%2F3260%2F5755085335_11e1dc9295_b.jpg&action

“Is there anybody down there?” He called down into the rock jetty, as the water was backing away, while the wave continued to build.

Wrongly, I assumed that whomever had fallen off was certainly dead, but surprisingly a voice answered Eric’s call. Moreover, the voice sounded fairly strong.

“We’re trapped! Help us!”

Then immediately the powerful wave struck us, as well as the two victims, and we were all momentarily under tons of water All four of us were

holding our breath, waiting for the massive wave to pass. The force of the giant wave nearly tore my grip loose from the fencing. All I could do was to close my eyes and hang tight to the old chainlink fencing, and to wait for the swirling wave to subside. My legs were swept out from under me, so my legs were pointed south. After the wave passed, Eric hurriedly and confidently spoke to me.

“I’m gonna save them, Joey. *You’re nuts, man!* You stay here and hold onto the fencing. Stick your left foot under the chainlink. I’m going to dive down there, and bring them up, one at a time. You hold onto the fencing, with one hand, and be ready to grab me or the victim, with your other hand. We’ll probably be riding a wave-up to you, so be ready, man!” *Is he really going to dive down there, into that swirling pitch black?* Terrified beyond belief, there was no way I was ready.

“I’ll be waiting, Eric! Good luck, man! Hang tough!” I woodenly answered, tightly holding onto the chain-link with my left hand.

As I was answering him, Eric turned and dove off into the black stormy waters off the north side of the rock jetty. Down he went, during that monstrous storm, with waves the height of a building and twice

as thick as a city bus. Groping around under the giant rocks of the jetty, he somehow managed to retrieve one of the victims. When I saw the next wave building and coming my way, I could barely make-out Eric holding onto what turned-out to be a skinny male teenager.

“Here I come, Joey! Hold the fence, and snag this guy! Grab him! You only got one shot.” *If I miss they’re going off the south side, and into the shark filled channel, without hope of land till Assateague Island!*

My left hand was gripping the chain link, and as instructed, I’d jammed my left foot under the edge of the chain link, for added anchorage. The end of the wire was cutting into the top of my left foot, but dealing with that pain was nothing compared to what I was vaguely seeing. Eric was riding a monstrous black wave directly toward me, clutching the exhausted semiconscious male victim. My right arm and leg were outstretched to try to snare Eric or the teen. As the wave hit, I missed the victim, but somehow managed to hook Eric’s right leg with mine, then I grabbed the teen, by the hair on the back of his head. Later, I’d come to realize that we were all cut-up pretty good, induced by repeatedly smashing into the rocks, which had semi-sharp edges,

with a few razor sharp barnacles.

The first teen Eric carried-up was conscious but woozy. Still, the teen was able to hold onto the chain link, and so I kept shouting at him to hold on to the fencing and not let go, or the next wave would surely wash him away. As stated, had he washed off the southern side of the jetty, he'd have gone into the shark-filled channel and out into the ocean. Eric immediately turned and again dove down under the northern side of the jetty. A few seconds later, up he came riding another black wave holding the second victim, also a male teen but a bit bigger. Once again, I made an effort to grab them, but this time I failed, but I did slow them down enough that they managed to get a hold on the rocks, and crawl toward the fencing, and I pulled them to the chainlink. At that point, all four of us were hanging onto the wire chainlink, surrounding the tower.

During all that insanity, people from the bar had formed a crude human chain, to the end of the rock jetty. The sober bartender had inspired and organized the human chain, demanding that only the sober people participate. Every one of them, and the four of us, managed to get back to shore, that night. It was a miracle, considering that some of them were

probably drunk, not just Eric and me. Most likely, the alcohol had bolstered my meager courage.

Eric had done the seemingly impossible! There was certainly no doubt that he'd put his life on the line, and all things considered, he should have died that night. Yet, he never received a medal or any form of commendation. His valiant deed wasn't mentioned in the local newspaper, and just went unnoticed. All he received were the cuts and bruises from the rocks, and the respect from myself and the bartender. The two teens, he'd rescued, didn't even stick around or come back to thank him. After saving them, he just left the beach to go find a hot shower and to bandage his cuts, before anyone got a chance to thank him. But like I said, the booze and the nightmares have obscured my memory of that night. I can't begin to describe how severe the nightmares seemed. The memories of that scary night are still scrambled, probably by the booze, and by the nightmares. When examined in the light of day, the events of the nightmares weren't that bad, but the corresponding depression was disproportionately horrible. In an odd way, it's as if it was a story I heard, rather than something which actually happened. Memories created in conjunction with

fatigue, nightmares, and booze can be a bit of a mare's nest, a muddled-up hodgepodge, lacking in detail and chronology. Oddly enough, there has been years of my life, where I've forgotten about that summer, only to have those memories return for no apparent reason. Sometimes a person will say something about their having a nightmare, and I'll say, 'I've only had a few in my entire life.' Later, I'll recall the Ocean City nightmares, and realize that I had inadvertently lied.

My crew referred to the jetty as, "The rock pile." On the southern side of that jetty was the deep waters on the previously mentioned tip end of the long peninsula, which paralleled the eastern shore. Behind the beach, going around the southern end of the peninsula, and up its western side, was where the sport fishing boats and private yachts were docked. In that deep water area, south of the rock jetty, was a phenomenally large shark population. Marine biologist from various universities were always coming there, studying the various sharkes, in what was referred to as, the 'Ocean City Inlet.'

<http://www.ocbound.com/map-of-ocean-city-md>

<http://www.abc2news.com/news/region/>

eastern-shore/great-white-shark-spotted-off-coast-of-ocean-city-md

Some evenings just before sunset, I'd stand on the rock jetty, looking south, into the deep channel inlet. If the seas were calm, I'd often see numerous shark fins, cutting the water's surface, with their dark ominous shapes, powerfully swaying just below the surface. The sharks came in many varieties, shapes, and sizes. Presumably, they had come in from the Atlantic, following the many fishing boats, hoping to dine on the large number of discarded fish, and voluminous amounts of fish guts, which were regularly being tossed overboard into the inlet channel, before the boats docked. In many ways the oceans have always been man's dumping ground. This has largely been in keeping with how humans have interacted with the big blue marble, for roughly the last three hundred thousand years.

In America, the more fanatical Christians are most apt to debunk the reality of global warming, even though in a very real way, to pollute the earth is like shitting on God.

Once We're Gone by Mosley A.

Riley

Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans.

Jacques Cousteau

Going out a few miles east into the Atlantic, right off the coast of Ocean City and Delaware, is a colossal group of underwater canyons (Baltimore and Wilmington Canyons), breaching with world-class marlin, a large and energetic sport fighting fish. Those fish truly fight, and not just to get away. They've been known to charge the boat, leap into the air and actually spear the fisherman, with their lethal sword-like bill. A few fisherman have been killed that way. In addition, the fish have also been known to spear the hull of the boat.

This group of huge underwater canyons are why Ocean City hosts the world's largest billfish tournament. Once, I saw a giant marlin tied to the side of a fishing yacht, which may well have rivaled the one caught by Ernest Hemingway's character, *Santiago*, the aging fisherman, who hooked into a

fictitious giant marlin, far out into the Gulf Stream. If you want a good read, in my humble opinion, that's a great one. It's a simple plot, but extremely well written.

<http://www.chesapeakequarterly.net/V14N3/main1/>

People come from all over the world to fish those underwater canyons, which I've been told, are so immense that they make the Grand Canyon look like a drainage ditch. Supposedly, nuclear submarines from China, Russia, and America, for years have used those canyons for strategic hiding places. Of course back then, it would have been only the US and Russia. Sometimes while sitting on my lifeguard tower, I'd contemplate that uneasy little fact. Calmly looking-out at the watery horizon, I'd sometimes think about the undersea boats lurking deep down, right out in front of me; submarines which held the nuclear potential to lay waste to large numbers of heavily populated American cities.

Each evening about two hours before sunset, when the shark fins had become eerily obvious, a

rather ancient-looking lankily built old gent, wearing a stretchy black latex bather's cap and your standard black speedo, came swimming steadily and valiantly, right up through the middle of that shark-filled Ocean City Inlet. At times, the old man was literally surrounded by the sharks, yet fearlessly, he swam through them.

He'd always swim around the southern tip of the peninsula, passing along the southern side of the rock pile, and then he'd turn left (north) and swim for only hundred yards, then he'd make another left, and he'd swim into my section of beach. He'd walk ashore, right in front of my stand, pull-off his latex bathing cap, and give me a polite nod, as he walked passed my stand and head west toward the boardwalk. Every late afternoon, my guards and I kept an eye out for him, always expecting him to be suddenly snatched below the surface, by the massive jaws of some giant toothy predator. We'd always look for the old daredevil to appear in the late afternoon, wondering each evening, if it would be the old man's last performance. The tourist would often stand along the rock jetty to watch the deadly swimming spectacle. That summer, the hallowed old gentleman became something of a local legend; my crew gave

him such monikers as: Suicide, or Suicide Max, or Max the Channel Swimmer, the Shark God, and Shark Bait.

“Holy shit, here comes Suicide Max, and just look at the number of shark fins out there, today! Jesus Christ! There’s about thirty fins, so there’s got to be a few hundred sharks cruising around in the channel. This could be the day, we’ll actually see the bloody feeding-frenzy.” One of my guards might yell.

Early evening or late afternoon, when the boats returned from the underwater canyons, that was the time, when there seemed to be the most sharks, and it was supposedly the time, when sharks are most likely to consider a man to be a seal. At those times of reduced light levels, the sharks apparently have trouble distinguishing between a seal, a big fish, and a human. Quite possibly, the only thing that saved the grizzled old man was the fact that the fishing boats had already filled the sharks’ bellies, with the unused bait fish, and with the aforementioned copious amounts of fish guts.

No one knew Max’s real name, nor did he volunteer it. Old Max wasn’t excessively sociable. Occasionally, as he slowly plod along in the channel, the sharks would literally bump into his long pale

wrinkly frame, and sometimes Max's head or arm would make contact with them. He never seemed shocked or repulsed by the creatures, but on such occasions, he'd simply use his open palms to matter-of-factly push the shark out of his way. It was as if Max was their friend, or they were his guardian. The witnessing tourists would say such things as, 'Holy shit, did you see that?', 'No fucking way, man!', 'Is he crazy!'

Max's hoary skin was so aged, he looked like a taller more gangly version of the old *Crypt Keeper* on TV. He had once told us that he celebrated his twenty-first birthday at the turn of the century, in 1900, meaning he was probably born around 1879. So back, when I was lifeguarding, and Max was swimming the channel, he was around a cool ninety years old. He said he'd been a private in the Spanish American War, a corporeal in the Philippine American War, and a sergeant in WWI. The man was too old for WWII, but supposedly he'd served, as a quality control manager in an airplane manufacturing plant, somewhere in Buffalo, NY. Those were the only things I knew about him. Like my Dad, Max wasn't into sharing too many of his life stories.

He was tall, lean, covered by extremely wrinkly near colorless skin decorated with a plethora of motley scabby-looking keratoses, dark brown and black age-spots, and most likely more than a few of those were various forms of skin cancer. He was bald except for sparse six inch strands of white hair, which still stubbornly clung to the sides of his head, just above each ear, but most intriguingly, half of one ear was missing. We lifeguards used to lie and tell the visiting tourists, that it had been bitten off by a shark. We made it our responsibility to hype the man's legend. We'd also claimed that Max had a spiritual relationship with the sharks, and was known as, 'The Shark God.' Most of the tourists believed that lie, after watching Max swim through the lethal creatures.

Max never did tell us how he lost the top half of his ear. I figured it had been in one of those aforementioned wars, where a bullet, sword, or bayonet had taken it off. A friend once told me that creating a legend, like The Shark God, was like planting a seed. Sometimes, it sprouts and yields a smelly little weed, which dies quickly within the season, but occasionally legends grow into mighty oaks, and so spread across continents, so the legend

appears to never die. Possibly his comment had something to do with the spread of such religious legends as: Krishna, Muhammad, Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Joseph Smith, Confucius, etc. Then for some reason, countless people go to war, trying to decide whose seed was divinely inspired and supports their cultural doings, and whose seed grows into the smelly little weed. You've got to love the idiots, who think that they've got the corner on God.

For some reason, Max appeared to be totally unafraid of the toothy monsters. Perchance, the creatures didn't think Max smelled good. What I found to be more thought provoking, was the reason why Max would run such an unnecessary risk. After all, there were plenty of other safer and nearby places he could have swum; still, he chose the shark-filled channel. No doubt he had his reasons. It could have been for the adrenaline, which still may be the best buzz ever conceived. Maybe he liked thrilling the tourists. On the other hand, I suspected that Max wanted to die, but was too afraid of eternal damnation to commit actual suicide, so by swimming with God's deadliest creatures, he'd found a way around that religious dilemma, while allowing himself to feel alive.

Religions fabricate enough fear, that good people are afraid to end their own suffering, supposedly proving that hell is real.

The Books of Terrors, by Mohammed R. I. Yahweh, LLD

To date, it seems a bit of a minor miracle, that old Max was never eaten. Considering the number of sharks, once nipped, and his blood was in the water, he would have only lasted two seconds.

A cop sees a man sitting on the railing of the Golden Gate bridge, or standing on the ledge of a skyscraper, and he does his ass to rescue the poor dude. But a ninety year old man, decides to swim with deadly toothy predators, on a near daily bases, and nothing is done; no ones intercedes. Age has its' perks. People knew better than to meddle with Max's destiny, and so he became a public spectacle, a mythic character. I used to wonder what the experience was like, but never had the guts to give it a shot. Everyone has their fears; well, almost everyone.

Once, after he'd trudged-up out of the water, and

was ambling in the still warm sand toward my stand. I inquired about when he had first started swimming with the sharks. He responded that it had only been a couple years prior, but that he did so only from mid-June through the middle of November; that after mid-November, the water and air were too cold. While one would have thought that his swim through the shark-filled channel was one hell of a major adrenaline pumper, Max always emerged from the water looking calm and relaxed, with a small smile.

Despite his advanced age, the long swim, and the obvious danger of the sharks, Max never emerged from the ocean appearing agitated or winded. I imagined as he climbed out of the water, that he thought, *“Well death, I’ve beaten you once again. Maybe, I’ll get lucky, next time.”* It was a bit like Russian roulette, only instead of bullets, Max used sharks, and without the risk of eternal damnation, which suicide supposedly brings. Years later, I’d play Russian roulette, but in a unique fashion. I just sat close to the small camp fire, holding six bullets in my hand, then with my eyes closed, I dropped them into the glowing red coals of the campfire. None of them hit me! It was a bit of a rush, but for some reason, I knew I’d be okay. Likewise, perhaps Max knew that

he'd be okay. Of course, what I did with the campfire was nothing compared to Max's swimming with sharks.

Up the beach, three blocks north of the rock jetty, was a large community fishing pier, jutting-out about two hundred yards into the Atlantic. The wooden structure stood high above the tides on long sturdy heavily creosoted wooden poles. Moreover, all the deck planking and railings were thickly creosoted. Huge galvanized lag-bolts held it all together. Day or night, the pier was almost continuously used by various fishermen, and sightseers. It was a great place to take a date to watch the sunrise over the ocean. Occasionally, after leaving a bar, I'd sit on the railing at the end of the pier, gazing-out at the serene ocean, and watch the sun come winking-up, while thinking about the Russian submarines, bristling with nuclear missiles, hiding in those underwater canyons, straight-out in front of me. *Wonder if those sailors operate on Moscow time?*

Unlike most of today's fishing wharfs, the Ocean City pier was free to the public. City governments are now always looking for ways to make money, codes, taxes, etc., be they legitimate, or not so much. Here

in Mobile, I've lost track of how many crooked politicians have been put in the slammer. Look at all the efforts that have gone into taxing, alcohol, weed, and tobacco. Try to put a new door on your house and you've got to pay for a permit. Don't mow your grass, you get a fine. Look at all the state fines, tolls, certificates, fees, etc. Now, if a fishing pier cost five million dollars to build, the local government will charge enough toll to pay for the pier in three or four years, and then, the powers that be will continue to charge for years thereafter, but bare-in-mind, that it was taxpayer's money that paid for it in the first place, and its taxpayers, who have to pay to use it. In my day, the pier was just a fun tourist attraction, and a fisherman's delight. Now days, there's always someone trying to turn a tourist attraction into a semi-unlawful profit-making entity. Go visit a natural wonder, and you'll often find there's some unnatural governmental entity trying to get rich off mother nature's natural beauty, as if, they own it. If a state has a 'national park,' they may benefit from the visiting taxpayer dollars, but they have to pay the feds to 'maintain' it.

Just above and below the waterline, depending on the tide, the fishing pier's support pilings were

covered, with a thick, two to four inch coating of pink and white stripped barnacles. Each barnacle was about an inch or two long, with a jagged razor sharp cup-edge. The barnacles seemed in greater abundance on the wooden pilings, than on the rock jetty. If someone had to be rescued, and it involved traversing under the pier, especially if there were rough waves, and the guard or the victim was unfortunate enough to be forced-up against the razor-like shell casings of the barnacles, things could get bloody. Of course, blood in the water meant you wanted to be on shore as fast as possible, since the pier was only three blocks from the shark filled channel. If a shark got a whiff of blood, it could cover that small distance in seconds. For short distances, sharks can swim at thirty five miles per hour.

Though it was fairly rare, every now and then, the sharks left the inlet to come into the swimmer's area of the beach. With the low visibility of the green plankton-laden water, quite likely the sharks may have ventured amongst the swimmers, more often, than we realized. We just didn't see them, unless they neared, or broke, the surface. Every so often, when on a rescue, I'd inadvertently kick something really

big. Anything below a depth of three feet was invisible. Also, occasionally during a rescue, you'd feel something big bump you from underneath or from behind; such occurrences never failed to give me a serious jolt of fear, and a corresponding squirt of adrenaline.

During a pull (rescue), if we were forced to pass through the barnacle coated pier pilings, we would try to time the angle and speed of our movements within the waves, so as to best avoid a collision with a piling and the corresponding bloody lacerations. At times, the currents could be so strong, that even though the victim had gone down well away from the pier, by the time you'd get to them, and start to pull them in, you found yourself being forced to take the victim through the treacherous razor covered pilings.

We referred to this procedure as, 'running the gauntlet,' or 'shooting the pier.' Trying to carry a person with you, as you are forced by the waves to shoot through the pilings, greatly reduced the lifeguard's maneuverability, and so a couple of times my guards came away bloody, other times it was the rescued tourist, who was bloody. Luckily, I never got cut. Generally, the big barnacles made long cuts but

didn't cut too deep, at most half an inch, but because of the number of the sharp calcified creatures on each pole, there were usually many gashes, and so lots of blood in the water, and as stated, with the presence of sharks, it became critical to get out quickly.

As the crew chief, I was in charge of the first aid kit. I'd just dry the area with a big piece of sterile gauze, then I'd cover the wound, using a small green aerosol can, which sprayed some kind of yellowish liquid. I assumed it was probably iodine or tincture of merthiolate. The poor victims always said the spray burned. After spraying it on the cuts and scraps, and letting it dry, then I'd smear on a liberal amount of zinc oxide. The same stuff we coated our noses with to prevent sunburn. In effect, the zinc oxide became like the bandage, and the wounded said that it seemed to sooth the pain, probably because the air couldn't irritate the cuts. If the person needed stitches, we either call the ambulance, or if the cuts weren't too bad, we find someone to drive them to the crappy hospital.

Seven members of my crew were stationed north of the pier, and there were three of us to the south, between the pier and the rock jetty, which served as

the southern border of the beach. Each guard was separated by roughly a one block distance. I was the middle guard of the three guard positions, south of the pier. At times, I had to assist the guard on the rock-pile, and sometimes I'd help the guards just on either side of the pier, but helping the rock-pile guard worried me, due to the most proximity of the sharks, always cruising right on the opposite side of the rocks, and nothing was stopping them, from coming around the tip of the jetty, but for some reason they rarely did that.

Each lifeguard sat perched atop a nine foot tall unpainted wooden tower, from nine in the morning, until five in the evening; except for: the assorted rescues, a half-hour lunch break, and the occasional bathroom visit, which was generally carried-out while swimming in the ocean. And on hot days, there was also the frequent dip in the surf to cool off from the blistering sun. This is where the story begins, concerning the guard with the problematic circadian rhythm.

We went to lunch in shifts, unless the ocean was too dangerous; then of course, nobody went to lunch that day, or someone might drown. Such eventful days seemed to drag-on forever, ending in

exhaustion. Those days were no doubt the genesis of nightmares, and the corresponding consumption of alcohol... all for very low pay. We did it for the since of fulfillment garnered from saving lives. Including myself, our crew was a total of ten guards. At lunch, five of us (from every other stand along the beach) went to lunch, so during lunch each of the five remaining guards had to watch-over two blocks of beach. Each guard watched their Beach as well as their neighboring beach. Guarding the unpredictable waters of the southern ten blocks of Ocean City was not like guarding the relatively calm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and it was vastly more difficult than guarding a pool, and so as stated, on days where the ocean was violent and menacing, no one ate lunch. Generally, on good days (days without strong currents or too many riptides), lunch wasn't generally a problem, with each guard simply watching all the swimmers for two blocks. On good days, there was only the occasional person going down, because they fell off their raft, or inhaled too much water, when hit by an unexpected wave, or a small brief rip opened. However, one of my guards, who happened to be an excellent NCAA swimmer, had an extremely serious problem with his after-lunch circadian rhythm, which appeared as if it was

going to result in some tourist drowning. I say, 'tourist,' since the locals, tended to be good swimmers, and the visitors, not so much.

Whenever that guard came back from his lunch break, he'd sit-up on his stand, then within a few minutes, he'd soon drift-off to sleep. The obvious problem with the lifeguard falling asleep, was that a drowning victim could go down unnoticed. The second, not so obvious, problem was that if the Beach Captain, who regularly drove up and down the nine miles of beach in his white *Beach Patrol* jeep, happened to see the napping guard, not only would the snoozing guard be fired, but since I was the supervising crew chief, I'd be canned, as well.

That world-class slumbering albatross hanging around my neck was named, Jay Morton. No matter how many times I trudged down to Jay's stand to blow my whistle and scream at him, to awake him up, and read him the riot act, about people possibly drowning, the next day after returning from lunch, Jay would invariably fall sleep, again. Worse yet, Jay would be asleep in full view of all the beach patrons. He seemed to be helpless in fighting-off his post-lunch snooze. It was as if he'd been slipped a potent sleeping pill.

Consequently, my guards nicknamed the dozing Jay, 'The Sandman.' While some might say that Jay was irresponsible, which he clearly was, blame might best be assigned to the fact that the sleep-producing portions of Jay's neurophysiology simply functioned far too well. People who suffer with narcolepsy experience marked daytime sleepiness, sometimes comparable to how a normal person might feel, after 48 hours, without any sleep. In that respect, Jay may have been partially blameless.

Narcoleptics are almost incapable of changing, since for them the sleeping parts of their brain are simply too powerful, and once activated come-on like a neurological tsunami. Of course, then in my youth, I didn't know anything about this brain condition. With regard to sleep, Jay was the polar opposite of me. Through the years, I've learned that with a meal, the hormone insulin is released by the beta cells of the pancreas. Insulin does many well-known things, like lowering blood sugar, but one of the lesser known actions of insulin is that it can displace the tryptophan molecules (amino acids), from the albumin protein in the blood, so suddenly there is more free floating tryptophan available to cross the blood brain barrier, and enter the brain, where it's

enzymatically converted into 5-HT, the neurochemical, which creates sleep. Hence, after lunch, Jay would fall into the peaceful loving arms of Morpheus, and the hell with the poor swimmers!

Once returned from lunch, The Sandman would be sitting high atop his nine foot lifeguard perch, and soon be sound asleep, nestled in his aluminum folding chair. Once unconscious, his head would usually fall backwards, and his mouth would fall wide open, so with his nose pointing skyward, his powerful snoring could sometimes be heard above the roar of the surf. This would frequently cause the surrounding beach goers to point at The Sandman, and laugh. Thinking it might solve his narcolepsy, I took away his chair, but he still fell asleep, sitting on top of his stand, but then with his head bowed down forward, and copious amounts of drool would run from his mouth. This made him look dead, then occasionally he'd literally fall off the front of his stand, so I gave him his chair back. Once, when the Sandman was sound asleep atop his guard tower, I took two guards with me, and together, we shoved over the tower, and he didn't awaken, until he hit the sand. He became angry, and we all yelled at him about how dangerous sleeping on the stand could be,

but in the end, our stunt had made no lasting impression. It became clear that something more drastic was required. I even contemplated allowing him to go sleep in the shade under the pier, for a half hour, but still had the Captain showed-up, I'd have been fired, and The Sandman's section of beach would still be unguarded. The Sandman's sleeping was a dangerous embarrassment.

I lived in fear of the beach patrol captain catching Jay sleeping. While I could generally make-out the Captain's vehicle at a goodly distance, sometimes the Captain would covertly patrol on foot, walking in civilian clothes up on the boardwalk, amongst the tourists, with his handy-dandy binoculars; then, he was virtually undetectable. And so, by not firing Jay, I was foolishly allowing people's lives to hang in the balance, as well as risking my job as crew chief.

It looked like the only choice I had was to go to the beach patrol captain and ask that Jay, my narcoleptic albatross, be fired. The only problem was that in all other respects, Jay was a fine man with a huge heart, and so I foolishly delayed, gambling that he'd somehow change. But again, the palpable peril was that I was risking people's lives. Fortunately, on

those occasions, where The Sandman was sleeping, and people were getting sucked out, the guards on either side of him, initiated the rescues, blowing their whistles and yelling, thereby awaking The Sandman, who then assisted them, so no lives were lost. Still, on bad days, it was only luck, no one died. After giving him a severe scolding, The Sandman would sincerely apologize, agree that his sleeping was a serious liability, and promise to change, yet the truth was that Jay was appeared to control his post-lunch sleeping. Something had to be done, but what?

As mentioned, right behind my ten guards was the old rickety wooden boardwalk, with all its various: shops, arcades, bars, theaters, restaurants, a carousel, hotels, motels, various kiosks, etc., and anyone, who happened to glance toward the ocean, might easily see the sleeping Sandman. Ocean City was definitely a vacation city, a first rate party town.

A lot of the young people, in their late teens and early twenties, worked in those businesses. The world of employers generally assumes that young people should work hard for significantly lower pay, just because they're young, and inexperienced, regardless of the quality of their work. While some youth can be troublesome, the youth often have

significantly more energy, ergo oft times, they accomplish far more than the older folks, who are usually paid more. My lifeguards and I were young, worked extremely hard, sometimes putting our lives on the line, and only received minimum wage. In the evenings, chemically (booze and drugs) unhinged students, and young professionals would roam the streets and the the boardwalk, draining the bars, raising plenty of hell, and providing the cops a legal outlet for their aggression, as well as something to gripe about. Few people remain the same, when it comes to drinking, especially males, often transforming into something which fails to vaguely resemble their normal self. More damage has been alcohol, than by all the other illicit drugs combined.

At that time, I was dating a nineteen year old Jewish girl, Ann Hamburger. She was hotter than Alabama asphalt in August. And yes, that was really her last name. Ann was a little hairy, but I believe that often hairy women tend to have more sexual enthusiasm. She was a rather full figured raven haired beauty. Surprisingly, she was a great swimmer, yet still had kept her marked feminine form... no bulky shoulders, and no wide v-shaped wide back, which too many of the women swimmers

of the Olympics customarily display, making them look too masculine to be appealing. Ann possessed plenty of water resistance in the more desirable anatomical locations.

Her family owned one of the boardwalk businesses, which sold hundreds of items, such as: bathing suits, beach towels, snow globes, ball-caps, T-shirts, flip-flops, seashells, diving masks, swim fins, and other such exciting things as heavily lacquered alien-looking dead horseshoe crabs. Those dead helmet-shaped horseshoe crabs were actually hot sellers, especially with the male children, under the age of sixteen. My guards and I would frequently, find live ones, which washed-up on the beach, and I must admit, they looked like a creature from another planet; the creatures were something which roamed the oceans, long before man.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Atlantic_horseshoe_crab](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_horseshoe_crab)

If Ann's overly controlling father'd had his way, Ann would have worked every day in the family's souvenir shop, from dawn till well past dusk, but

only for the years, which she could still breath. When Ann finally refused to work more than forty hours a week, her father threatened to kick her out of the home, and fire her from that miserable job... to literally excommunicate Ann from their family. Some people can convince themselves, that they are motivated by love, when in truth, it's unambiguously greed, too often combined with the desire to control others. Her father's booming threat to kick her out was made with a red face and arms windmilling. This dramatic display caused the strong willed Ann to call his bluff and up the ante. The next day, she was working at her father's store, and said she was taking a break. She used the time to return to her home, pack-up her clothes, etc., and move into my place, with me, not even bothering to ask me if it was okay, and neither did she say goodbye to her parents. Her father was solidly devastated, but said nothing directly to Ann. When he realized that she'd left the home, he initially didn't know that she was living with me. They were terrified at first because she'd said she'd be back to the store after her break. As I later learned, he'd first figured she'd moved in with Hanna, her best friend, and Hanna was an accountant from a conservative orthodox Jewish family. Ann was initially afraid to tell him, about me. To make

matters worse, I was a non-Jew, a goy or gentile! Every religion knows they've got the corner on the market, and likes to give those people, who are not members, some type of derogatory moniker.

When it became clear where Ann had gone, her mother played both sides of the fence. When Ann's dad finally found out that she was sleeping with a non-Jew, he underwent a major meltdown. Of course, to his face, the mother blamed him for Ann's apparent abandoning of her faith. Ann's mom tried to convince her that she should come back home, and no doubt she did her best to patch things-up with Ann's devastated dad. The mother went so far, as to come to my apartment, and that's when I saw that the mother was clearly a master manipulator, trying to make Ann feel guilty, almost convincingly telling her that she was killing her father; that Ann was literally going to give her poor father a heart attack, and that the business was failing without her. However, Ann knew all about the 'great Jewish guilt game,' as she called it, and remained mostly unfazed. Often the children know their parents, better than the parents know themselves.

“Ann, you know your father loves you, and you're killing him with your disrespectful behavior...

and with a goy, no less... Your father and I can't sleep... We are worried sick, about what will become of you! Your father is thinking about a visit to the rabbi! You're throwing your life away like this... no future! How are you going to feel, if you give your father a heart attack... heaven forbid? You know, he's not young and works too much, and now he must work even harder. You're killing him! He needs your help... all the years he has taken care of you, and 'this' is how you repay him? We're so worried, we can't run the store, without help! Know doubt you're having sex with this gentile? Have you considered what will happen, if you get pregnant?" Her mother had nodded her head toward me, when he screeched-out those words.

Ann pretended to be unfazed by her mother's visit, albeit the visit did more to Ann, than Ann admitted. Ann had guts and brains, and decided to yet further up the ante. The next day, she went to work as a store manager, for one of her dad's biggest competitors, only two blocks from their family business. To add insult to injury, the owner was a gentile, and basically sold many of the same junky items as did Ann's dad, including the lacquered horseshoe crabs. Ann was paid twice the salary her

dad had been paying her, and she never worked more than forty hours a week! Of course, this tidbit was passed-on to the mother, during her next visit to my apartment. I always had to hide the booze, when her mother showed-up.

The competitor's business began to markedly improve, with Ann's hard work and well practiced business skills. When her father found-out about Ann's working for the goy competitor, he went ape-shit; initially claiming he would never talk to Ann again. Nevertheless, Ann's mother persuaded the father to back down about that threat, and agree to the forty hour work week, as well as to raise Ann's salary, ergo Ann went back to work for her folks, barely making above minimum wage. She also had to promise not to see me, and on that promise she lied. Her mom knew the truth, but told Ann's father that Ann was living with another girl.

Jewish families are often close, but every now and then, with a little too much emphasis on the coin. Like any other behavior, perhaps greed has something of a genetic basis. Sure money (too much or too little) can damage any family, but Ann's dad practically destroyed his relationship with his only child over it. I'm sure he'd disagree, but in my book,

her father's god was money, not the almighty tetragrammaton. Consider how long Israel has held the West Bank, and how much disproportionate misery and death they've inflicted on the Palestinians. My bet is that the ancient Pharaohs treated the Jewish slaves better than the Jews currently treat the Palestinians.

With each visit to my apartment, her mother would remind Ann that one day the retail business would be hers. Granted, her parent's work ethic was impressive, but by the same token, I found it to be sadly depressing. I used to imagine what her father's tombstone might read.

Here lies the man, whose family worked like slaves, selling lacquered horseshoe crabs.

When Ann returned to the family business, it was not to be under her father's supervision, but rather under her mother's. Ann was a good daughter, a fine and largely honest person, far better than I, and certainly better than her controlling greedy father. Ann just didn't want to be a slave to retail. Now that I'm considerably older, I fully realize that there is something to be said for living your life on your own terms, while you've still got the time to do it. Live long enough, and you begin to realize that life does

indeed skate by in what seems the twinkling of an eye.

One day you're sliding down the birth canal, and then rigor mortis is setting in, with just a few notable memories jammed in between.

The Lonely Legacy by Leroy M. Williams

One afternoon, I was giving some unpleasant, yet fairly serious, thought to handing-over the narcoleptic Sandman to the captain, when sexy Ann came walking-up to my stand. She'd generally arrive just before I was about to get off work. Ann had finally moved back in with her parents, due to her mother's relentless pressure; nevertheless, she still spent her late evenings with me.

Since my beach was nearly empty, I climbed down and stood next to her in the warm sand, talking about the vents of our day, before we walked back to my place to stop talking. I've always felt that highly religious Semite girls have the most powerful sex drives, possibly fueled by the high octane parental/religion-induced shame of sin; frequently, the more religious a person is, the more formidable

their sexual passion. If you're a guy and doubt what I'm saying, just start hanging-out at your local synagogue, and introduce yourself the available women.

That afternoon, as was her custom, Ann told me all about how well the business had done that day. *Working in retail probably better prepares one for death, since they have less of an interesting life.* Ann then mentioned that the shop had just received a shipment of some 'really cool,' giant swim fins. According to Ann, the new fins were nothing short of amazing, but fairly expensive. She said that they were much wider, and considerably longer than the conventional swim-fins of the day. She claimed that if an amateur swimmer wore those fins, that he or she could likely beat any Olympic gold medalist. Back then, Mark Spitz was just becoming the swimming rage, and was quite popular in Ann's family, since he was Jewish. During her lunch break that day, Ann had borrowed a pair of the new fins, and used them in a nearby hotel pool. She said that she was astonished at how phenomenally fast she could swim, mentioning that with those fins, she was able to perform the difficult butterfly stroke like a champion, and had felt like a dolphin, undulating

through the water. I then told her about Jay doing his usual post-lunch sleep thing.

“Joey, what have you decided to do about The Sandman? Are you going to tell the captain about his sleeping, before you get fired? We should go see The Captain, as soon as you get off, today; just get it over with, Joey. Besides, you know someone could really drown because of Jay, and sooner or later, the old captain is gonna catch The Sandman, anyway; then, you’ll both be unemployed. You’re foolish not to fire him. Heck, not even The Sandman can fault you, Joey. You’ve given him way too many chances! I don’t know what you’re waiting for! You want someone to drown? His section of beach is definitely unsafe, when he’s sleeping. How are you going to feel when someone dies? For that matter, someone could die on your section of beach, while you’ve gone to wake-up The Sandman! You ever think about that?” Ann liked to affectionately nag, and when she did she tended to cover all the bases and so she left little to no room for a counter argument. She and her family made me wonder if nagging wasn’t something of a Jewish trait. But, being nagged by Ann was a caring thing, though occasionally she was a bit of a control freak, much as her parents were. It also helps

if the nagger isn't dimwitted, and Ann was extremely bright. She was also a good soul; one of the few women I went with, who didn't have a serious drug or alcohol problem. Her addictions were sex, religion, and guilt, with the latter two fueling the former.

"Well, if the captain catches The Sandman sleeping, and I get fired, maybe your dad will give me a sub-minimum wage job, selling lacquered horseshoe crabs." I joked.

"My dad would like to give you a quick death, and stick your cold dead body in an iron maiden, then drop you in that underwater canyon, you've always been taking about; especially, since you're fucking me, and you're not Jewish. You're killing his Hebrew soul. He continually blames my being with you, on my mother, and he endlessly grumbles about it. He thinks she hasn't been strict enough on me. Dad is afraid to talk directly to me, since he knows I'll leave, again. I sure don't want to follow in his foot steps, and become a retail princess, spending my life selling souvenirs to tourists."

"Your Dad's so cheap, he'd skip the traditional funeral and just toss my body, over there, in the inlet with the sharks. Still, I've got to admit, he works like

ten men, doing the best he can, to leave you a financial legacy. Part of the problem between you and your dad is that your's smarter than he is, and you're using your superior intellect against him. By letting him find out about me, and working for his competition, you've made him feel less of a father, and more like a failure. So, maybe you should eat a little crow, and ease-up on him. Besides, business is business, and having a financially secure future isn't all that bad." I nagged back.

While I greatly enjoyed having sex with Ann, I knew that at the end of summer, I was leaving and not coming back, and would be moving-on to some other girl. As a result, I felt it was important that she not continue to distance herself from her parents. Women generally don't distinguish between love and sex. For most males, the two have little to do with each other; so being a male, in that respect, women seem short-sighted and overly dramatic about sex.

Ann's juxtaposing her comments about my firing The Sandman, right after her describing the new swim-fins, started me thinking. Indirectly, she'd had provided me with the solution for The Sandman's sleeping problem. Her conversation had inspired a minor epiphany.

“Ann, thanks to you, I think I just figured-out exactly what I want to do about The Sandman, provided that you can loan me a pair of your dad’s new super-duper swim fins, for a few minutes tomorrow. Could you possibly arrange to take a break and sneak them out of your dad’s store, around lunchtime? They need to be here, about twenty minutes after The Sandman goes on on his lunch-break. I’ll make sure they’re clean and dry, and good as new, when they’re returned to you. You’ll want stay and watch what I’ve got in mind. If this works, it could be worth your time.” During the next few minutes, I laid out the plan to Ann, then we walked to my apartment.

My friend, Jimbo managed the cottages and apartments, where I lived in Ocean City, and for that he received free rent, and a small monthly check. For two different reasons, Jimbo was nicknamed, The Stroke. One reason is obvious, and the other was that he’d been a former California swimming champion in three different events. Throughout his late thirties, he still swam one mile every morning, just to stay in shape. I’ve always been amazed at how many extremely good and talented people live on the edge of poverty, especially: athletes (except for

professional athletes), professional chess players, and artists; whereas, so many rich people tend to have little to no talent, other than what they learned in school, and/or their greed and knack for making money. When it came to women, working on the beach had a few advantages, ergo I had set Jimbo up with several beautiful dates; ergo, he owed me, and it was time to call in that debt.

The next afternoon, right after The Sandman had gone to lunch, Jimbo came to my stand. A few moments later, Ann showed-up with the huge magic swim-fins, protectively wrapped in a terrycloth beach towel, along with a cheap used yellow, blow-up air mattress. The swim-fins looked to be about four feet long, and just over a foot wide, they were about three times the normal sized diving fin. The Stroke and Ann both walked over and stood beneath the pier, out of the burning sun, and where The Sandman wouldn't see them on his return from lunch; while sunlight tends to washout colors to light pastels, it can make shadows appear darker. The two of them also stood, so that they were hidden by support pilings.

Ann had brought-along a pair of binoculars, to better view the planned entertainment. I stood up on

my stand, watching the distant boardwalk, for the return of The Sandman. When at last I saw him coming, and still a couple of blocks away, I signaled The Stroke, who with the magic fins in one hand and the yellow air mattress under his other arm, walked out into the waves in front of The Sandman's stand.

The Stroke had merged with the swimming tourists, covertly keeping the swim-fins out of sight under the murky water. He placed the upper half of his body crosswise on the mattress, still keeping the fins on his feet well below the murky surface, invisible to the returning Sandman. The Sandman didn't know The Stroke, so there was no risk of him being recognized. True to form, The Sandman hadn't been back on the stand for only a couple of minutes, before he had obviously fallen sound to sleep. His head was back, his mouth widely gaped-open, and his soft palate flapping-out its vibratory snore. I raised my arms, to give The Stroke the signal to proceed out to deep water. Laying lengthwise and half way up onto the yellow air mattress, The Stroke kicked with the powerful giant fins, and easily jetted far out into the deeper waters of the murky green Atlantic, much further than any conventional swimmer would normally dare venture.

Using those fins, with his upper torso on the air mattress, The Stroke cut through the water like a speedboat. The fins enabled him to propel himself like nothing I'd ever seen. *They'd be great to use on rescues!* Periodically, The Stroke would glance back over his shoulder in my direction. When he was finally a good 600 yards off shore, about a third of a mile, I gave him the 'dog-paddle' signal, and The Stroke pushed the cheap yellow float away from himself, waited till the mattress had been blown about thirty feet south of himself, then he started to affect his fake drowning routine.

As The Stroke began to mimic the classic 'splash and thrash' of a desperate drowning victim, I started running toward The Sandman's stand loudly blowing my metal lifeguard whistle. Ann had her binoculars trained on The Sandman's face. When I was twenty yards from his stand, hearing my loud whistle, The Sandman finally awoke, and looked directly at me, as if to say, "Why are you blowing that damn whistle, disturbing my sleep?" Every tourist's eye was then riveted on The Sandman and the apparent drowning victim, six hundred yards out in the ocean.

In answer to The Sandman's questioning look, I simply pointed east, straight at The Stroke, doing one

fantastic job of pseudo-drowning. When The Sandman swiveled his head and spied The Stroke, and the distant yellow air mattress, it looked as if he was hit by a high voltage cattle prod. To say the least, The Sandman was then fully awake, and psychologically staggered, at how far out the drowning victim was located. The flimsy yellow air mattress was being pushed further and further away from the victim, by the prevailing wind. The scene looked as if a non-swimmer had unwisely ventured too far from the shore, and then somehow had fallen off his air mattress, and was in desperate trouble. That staged drowning looked Hollywood perfect! Better yet, it appeared that all the spectators on the beach, fully believed it was a real drowning, as well.

In a flash, The Sandman leaped out of his aluminum chair, hit the beach sand hard, grabbed his orange tin torpedo buoy, slid the loped rope up his right arm, over his head, and across his neck and chest, as he sprinted for the water. The terrified guard ran through the shallow shore break, then once waist deep, he released his grip on the torpedo buoy, dove-in, and began to put all his NCAA swimming skills into overdrive, swiftly swimming straight out into the ocean, trailing the cumbersome

orange painted metal torpedo buoy in his wake. But, it was going to be an exceptionally long distance for a swimming sprint. The Sandman's swimming skills were indeed impressive, but nothing in comparison to what The Stroke was capable of, with those huge supernatural swim-fins.

As The Sandman was giving it his all, The Stroke was going down and splashing up to the surface, staying down just long enough to pretend to be legitimately coughing and choking on sea water, when he broke the surface. Every now and then, he'd let go with some desperate scream for help. The Stroke clearly deserved an Oscar for the year's best drowning-man performance.

"God! Help, me! Help me! Please, Help! Help! Please help me!"

The Sandman was impressively swimming, fast and straight like a well aimed bullet. No doubt ,The Sandman was operating in full-blown panic mode. However, somewhere in his mind, he knew that the distance was simply too far, for him to be able to maintain his swimming sprint. Fifty yards shy of The Stroke, The Sandman plainly showing signs of fatigue. At the same time, The Sandman knew that the victim wouldn't stay on the surface much longer,

and no doubt feared that his massive effort was going to be for not. There was little doubt that The Sandman was wondering how long he'd been sleeping on his stand, for the victim to have gotten a third of a mile offshore. At that point, all the beachgoers were standing-up and watching in shock. They clearly assumed that what they were witnessing was a drowning in progress. Again, The Stroke's giant new swim fins could not be seen, due to the green water. The tourist began to gather, about sixty feet back from the water's edge, pointing at The Stroke, watching and discussing the long-distance rescue.

“My God look how far out that poor drowning fellow is!”

“That poor guy must have fallen off that yellow float! See it?”

“How the hell did he get that far out, anyway?”

“He shouldn't have gone out so far, if he didn't know how to swim!”

“I didn't know the guard would let someone go out that far.”

“Didn't you see that that stupid guard was sleeping, up there on his stand. He was up there snoring? I heard him! He oughta be shot! That

drowning guy, out there, is probably gonna die!”

“I don’t think that there’s any way that the lifeguard is going to get to him in time! That poor man is just too far out!”

“Don’t you know that lifeguard regrets falling asleep.”

“Yeah, you know that guard feels like shit for sleeping on duty! He’ll lose his job, for sure! He might even get charged with manslaughter!”

“That guy must have accidentally fallen off that yellow air mattress. The wind just keeps blowing that mat further and further away. The lifeguard better hurry, but I think it’s too late.”

Considering how far from shore The Stroke was, and the fact that The Sandman had been swimming at a full speed, it was obvious that The Sandman was going to be completely out of gas and utterly exhausted, by the time he reached The Stroke. There was no rip current that day, just the usual waves two to three foot waves, and the beach was fairly safe, so several of my guards had walked-over to enjoy the charade; but of course, they all pretended to look gravely concerned, since we wanted The Sandman, as well as everyone on the beach, to think what was

happening was the real thing. Only my other eight guards, The Stroke, and Ann knew about the therapeutic farce. This was a true psychological bombshell for The Sandman! As time passed, I could hear more alarmed comments, from the beach-goers. One woman just kept loudly yelling.

“My God! Oh my God! That poor man!” Over and over she yelled those words. *She realizes the victim is too far out to be saved.*

When The Sandman, at last got himself and his orange torpedo buoy close to The Stroke, he had completed the third of a mile sprint, and it was more than obvious that The Sandman was totally expended, so I was glad he had the buoy with him, since he was so tired from the insanely fatiguing 600 yard sprint, I was afraid he might drown, before returning to shore. As the physically and psychologically drained Sandman approached the supposed drowning victim, The Stroke locked in his last Oscar winning performance, theatrically voicing one last plea.

“Help me, pleaseeeee!”

The Stroke then turned his back to The Sandman, sucked in one last giant lungful of air before he

slipped below the surface. Once ten feet beneath the plankton rich green surface of the Western Atlantic, The Stroke was completely invisible. With those giant fins, he was transformed into a high speed underwater human-rocket, which allowed him to quickly jet below The Sandman, who was still swimming out to the spot, where The Stroke had gone down. Swiftly, The Stroke headed in southwestern diagonal, directly towards the giant fishing wooden pier. The tourists on the beach stayed fixated on where they'd last seen the victim go down. The long fins were so effective, and The Strokes' lungs so large, that he'd covered well over four hundred yards on his first breath. He only briefly popped-up just ahead of a wave, for one quick breath, and was almost to the fishing pier.

No one but us guards had seen him take that brief breath. The next time he came-up, he was inside the pilings, well hidden from everyone's view. All the people on the beach, but Ann and my guards, assumed that the drowned man was still somewhere deep below the desperate and fatigued Sandman. The beach goers stayed riveted to The Sandman.

The few hundred onlookers believed the body of the drowning victim was somewhere beneath the

psychologically terrified and physically drained Sandman. The Sandman was hopelessly searching for some sign of the body. In anguish, he had discarded his torpedo buoy, so that he could dive deeper. This frightened me, since I began to worry the torpedo buoy would drift too far away for the exhausted Sandman to get hold of it, again. The onlookers stood in small groups, pointing at and watching The Sandman diving up and down. They were all convinced that someone had actually drowned. People began to shake their heads. A couple of women began crying. One of the tourists, a middle aged gentleman, walked-up to me. He'd picked me out, from my group of guards, because I wore a dark blue t-shirt, sporting the white words 'Crew Chief.'

"Hey son, looks like there ain't gonna be no finding that poor man. One thing's for sure, he's gotta be dead, as long as he's been down, now. You know your lifeguard, out there, feels like hell for falling asleep up there on that stand. Wouldn't you say?"

"There's no doubt about that, sir. The guy's body will probably wash-up tonight, or maybe sometime tomorrow morning. I hope the dead guy doesn't have a wife and kids. For sure, that guard gonna lose his

job. If the dead guy has a family, they'll probably sue the city. Could be a lot of moola involved in that suit, since that guard was asleep. It's a real shame, all right. You can't sleep up on the stand, if you're a lifeguard." Sadly, I agreed with the tourist, as I shook my head.

"Aren't you going to go out there and help that guy?" The man asked, after a brief delay.

"There's really no point. Like you said, the victim's already dead. He probably won't float-up, any time soon. All we can do at this point is to find the body, but with all these people on the beach, we can't spare the guards to go looking for a body, which we most likely won't find, too easily. Still, like I said, it'll probably wash-up, unless of course it goes around the end of that far rock jetty, and into the channel on the other side, where there's countless hungry sharks; in which case, it'll be eaten, and never be found." I answered, stirring the pot.

More women had begun to sob loudly. Oddly enough, the children seemed to be remarkably unaffected. The guards and I wanted all the tourists on the beach to be judgmentally glaring hard at The Sandman, when he finally came swimming back in. My guards and I simply kept agreeing with all the

onlookers that the victim was obviously dead.

Time after time, The Sandman dove deep, still looking for the missing victim. He knew in his heart, that the victim had been down too long and was dead, all because he had been enjoying his usual after-lunch nap. The Sandman was completely discombobulated, mentally and physically broken. We all could hear his wailing cries of frustration and guilt, even that far out.

After about twenty or thirty deep dives below the surface, in search of the nonexistent body, The Sandman began to scream, begging for our help. He blew his lifeguard whistle, and waved for us to come-out to assist him. Clearly, The Sandman was totally burned-out. The other guards and I just stood on the beach, shaking our heads, and shrugging our shoulders, as if to say, “*You really screwed the pooch, Jay. There no point in our coming out, now.*” The other guards and I waved for him to come back in to the beach. How he hated to see us waving him in, finalizing his apparent failure, that he’d needlessly allowed someone to die! Most of the beach goers just stood watching and shaking their heads, as stated, a few women cried, all fully believing that someone had died, and that The Sandman was the only person

to be blamed. A few people began to shout their feelings.

“Oh, my God! How horrible! It’s been much too long, the poor man surely has to be dead!” One woman screamed.

“Jesus!” Her husband echoed, shaking his head.

“Oh God! Don’t you know that guard feels bad for sleeping up on that stand.” A woman stated.

“God bless that dead man’s soul. God bless them both.” A younger woman dramatically proclaimed. *She looks so beautifully serious.*

Meanwhile, The Stroke, only waist deep and barely under the south side of the pier, had taken off Ann’s marvelous swim-fins and was getting out of the water on the opposite side of the pier, a block and a half south of Jay’s stand. With the powerful fins, The Stroke had transversed through the pier and easily avoided pilings, while swimming underwater. Coming out of the water, he used his body to conceal the fins from The Sandman, and the crowd to the north of the pier. Ann walked out into the water with a beach-towel and meant The Stroke in the shore break, quickly wrapping-up the beautiful fins, then package in hand, she headed back to her father’s

store, where she rinsed them with fresh water, dried them, and returned them to the store shelves. She told her dad that she used them to swim in the nearby hotel pool, as she'd done the day before.

The yellow air mattress later washed-up on the rock-pile. That night, my crew and I all chipped in to take Ann and The Stroke to eat at *Phillip's Crab House*. It was Ann's and my favorite place to eat. That seafood restaurant had received highly favorable reviews in several popular magazines. Since the guards 'knew' all the waitresses, we generally received extra-large portions of the succulent seafood.

When at last, The Sandman slowly swam back to the shore, towing his buoy, he swam part of the distance on his back, most likely to avoid the stares of the condemning beach patrons. Climbing out, he was blanched pale, shaking like a leaf, still huffing and puffing like a run-away locomotive. It was obvious that he was physically and psychologically depleted. The Sandman realized full well that the victim was dead, and that it was completely his fault for dozing-off on the stand. Guilt can be such a potent poison.

Where pain cripples the body and may produce suicide, unavoidable guilt destroys the spirit.

The Python's Song by Wilmer M. Lorley

“God, I’m sorry! I’m so sorry! I’m so so sorry! Jesus, please forgive me, guys! Yes, I was asleep! I know I really messed-up! I know it!” Jay bellowed, while tears streaked down his face.

There on his knees just above the shore break, The Sandman had clearly hit rock bottom. At that moment, I did feel sorry for him. The young lifeguard was a pathetic sight, indeed. He was crying and shaking, with hands loosely covering his washed-out face. We guards, and the beach patrons, just stood there and watched him undergo the total meltdown. Consequently, I had to look away a few times, so he wouldn’t see me laugh. A couple of families were leaving the beach, and others were returning to their beach blankets and chairs. Once his wails and sobs subsided, I spoke-up with a lighthearted little speech. The speech was unplanned and a bit awkward, and considering the circumstances, it came out as unnatural, and completely inappropriate.

“Wow! You really screwed-up, Jay! But, don’t

worry so much. We won't tell The Captain. We'll just pretend nothing ever happened, unless of course, the victim's family complains, or some beach goer tells the newspaper, or the guy's body floats-up, where it can be found. But maybe, it'll drift over into the inlet, and the sharks will eat it, so no one will know, but us, and all these people out here on the beach. Let's just hope the victim didn't have any vindictive relatives. You know they might be wanting revenge. But really Jay, don't worry about it, people die all the time. Please do me a favor and try to stay awake, from now on... no more napping on your stand. We don't want any more dead people! Maybe you should just skip eating lunch, and eat a bigger breakfast and dinner. Now, just get-up there on the stand, and try to stay alert... carry-on! All this crying and sobbing... you're making yourself look bad, man. Remember now... say awake!"

That absurd flippant commentary certainly more than shocked a few of the nearby listening tourists. I prayed that my casual narration wouldn't get back to The Captain. People didn't have cellphones back then. But amazingly, that foolish nonchalance, concerning the drowning victim had failed to clue-in The Sandman to the fact the drowning was actually

just a practical joke. Apparently, the trick had fooled everyone! Having made my ridiculous little speech, we guards simply went back to our respective stands and let The Sandman continue to suffer with his guilt, till the end of the workday.

Most likely Jay was too exhausted to properly process the absurdity of my speech, and none of the beach patrons said a word about my stupid little speech. Seemingly, it only added to his apparent breakdown. Shakily, The Sandman got to his feet and stumbled off toward his stand. The stunt seemed to have given him the equivalent of a temporary frontal lobotomy, and though the effects were fleeting, I'm sure that he's never forgotten it. Perhaps, it became a reoccurring nightmare for him. After all, that is one of the primary reasons we dream, to bleed-off life's stresses, to fitfully stitch-up that ever unraveling hem on the sleeve of life, if I may poorly paraphrase that writer of old, Willy Wiggle-stick (William Shakespeare).

The then pathetic Sandman, slowly climbed backup on his stand, and forlornly stared out at the expansive green ocean. Periodically, he made small forlorn crying sounds for the rest of the day. His psyche was in orbit, just beyond Pluto, at least for

the rest of that day. We left him to stew in his own juices, alone on his stand. I thought about walking down to explain what we'd actually done, but two things stopped me. One was the longer the drama went on, the greater the likelihood that he'd never again fall asleep on the stand, and the other reason was that I was actually afraid to tell him, for fear he might insanely attack me, and Jay was a powerfully built fellow.

While I'd planned the sinister little trick well, I hadn't thought about how to handle The Sandman's subsequent psychodrama. In that respect, it was a bit like when I killed Fritz the cat, where I'd effectively planned the killing of the cat, but had failed to plan beyond that, and ended-up being stuck with the dead cat's body. After The Sandman returned to shore, I really didn't know how to proceed. Originally, I figured that my causal little speech would have clued him in, but he was so traumatized, it hadn't.

The guards and I simply turned and walked back to our individual wooden towers, acting as if the drowning had been no big deal. Jay's section of beach, where the apparent drowning had occurred, had a few hundred people that day, and amazingly it appeared that all had assumed The Stroke, had

actually drowned! Needless to say, many of the people were shocked and continued to stare and even glare at the exhausted Sandman. Some looked at him with open disgust, some with pity, others just seemed curious. The kids on the beach simply went on with life, as if nothing happened. Many of the adults of the crowd were mystified that we hadn't done more, and that The Sandman was still allowed to remain up on his stand. For me, the situation was like having a very public secret. We had hoodwinked The Sandman's and his beach, with all its' tourists!

That staged freakish public drowning didn't worry me, since the police never came out onto the beach, unless we, the guards, called them from the phone on the pole next to my stand. The lifeguards were effectively the only law enforcement on the beach. Besides, no one had actually drowned. The pseudo-drowning had unquestionably given a lot of tourists something to talk about, during their dinner that evening. My primary concern was that the stunt would get back to the beach patrol captain, and a joke like that, would not sit well with him, but of course, the trick was so completely over the top, I doubted he would suspect it to be possibly true.

Back on his stand and perched in his aluminum

folding chair, The Sandman continued to be the object of public scrutiny, for the remainder of that especially miserable day. He wallowed in a state of shock, guilt, and humiliation, tearfully gazing out at the lethal ocean. None the less, he carefully watched over his flock of swimmers. He also avoided looking at the various condemning tourists on his beach. Needless to say, not once did Jay fall asleep. Judging from the repeated spasmodic jerks of his exhausted body, he seemed to be periodically weeping. My lack of empathy, allowed me to largely look at Jay's situation as humorous. After all, his temporary spell of repentance was infinitely better, than someone drowning, or my continuing to wait for someone to drown, or for me to lose my job.

After The Stroke's sterling performance with the huge swim fins, the Sandman never again fell asleep on the stand. The combination of terror, physical exhaustion, bottomless guilt, and profound public humiliation proved to be a sure fire remedy for Jay's narcolepsy. Due to a couple of last minute rescues, we were all getting off work a little late. As a group, my entire crew were trudging off the beach, that's when we finally told The Sandman, the naked truth, about The Stroke, and his using Ann's magical swim-

fins. The Sandman's mouth hung wide open the entire time, I explained the prank, and I didn't leave out the fact that had we not played the malicious prank, someone might have actually drown on his beach, or I would have had to soon fire him. He fully realized the truth in the two latter alternatives, since the prank mimicked what could have easily become reality... a death on his beach.

Then inappropriately, we (except for The Sandman) began to laugh. The laughter was probably perceived by The Sandman as adding insult-to-injury, but it was simply impossible to contain our laughter. The Sandman was none too happy about our humor, still his look of apparent relief could not be disguised. Before I explained what we'd done to him, his face was that of a stranger, a twisted mass of guilt laden muscle tension, which soon gave-way to his normal expression. We all knew he was happy to hear the truth.

"Fuck you all! Fuck you assholes!" The Sandman repeatedly screamed, but then a small smile briefly created across his face.

Despite his words, you could easily tell that he was experiencing a major cathartic release. *God, we really scared the shit out of him!* He had instantly

transitioned from hating himself, into hating us, yet the hate was infinitely better than the guilt. We all enjoyed seeing the marked relief, and the hollow disdain, on his haggard face.

“Are you fucking shitting me? You assholes! I can’t believe you did that stupid shit to me!” Jay loudly screamed.

“Well, Jay, I had to do something to get your attention, before someone really did die, you sleeping dumb-ass! That fake drowning could easily have been a real one, and now you know how that would feel! What would you rather have... a joke played on you, or an actual dead person on your hands? And now, you know what truly could have happened, when you fall asleep on duty! I think that a fake death is a lot better than a real one... don’t you? I just hope the captain doesn’t hear about this! I’m going to deny knowing anything about it. We all need to stick to that... we know nothing! If you do fall asleep again, you will be fired. I promise you!” I replied.

The Sandman continued to call us lots of names and threatened to kill all of us, but he never did. He was obviously relieved! As mentioned, the Sandman and I kept our jobs. The next morning on the beach,

we were all friends, again. Never, did I have to worry about Jay becoming The Sandman. The Sandman had died that theatrical day on the beach, and an ever vigilante Jay had been born, anew. As mentioned, Ann, The Stroke, the guards and I, all went to Open City's famous crab house, for dinner that night. We invited Jay, but he declined, still sulking over the fake drowning trick, and probably too drained from the strenuous swimming event that day. We all knew, Jay just wanted to go find a bottle.

I sincerely miss all those great guard friends; Jay included. They were all fine young men with a purpose. Now, I have no idea where they may be, but I still have the severely faded group photo of us standing together on the beach. Looking at the photo, we all appear naively young, innocent, and kind of goofy-looking, but then, with the plethora of rescues, at that time, we felt so important, but maybe we actually were. The job aged me significantly, in more ways than just simple physical wear and tear. Back then, during the day, we were men swimming against death, and at night, we hung-out at bars, hooked-up available women, then dealt with our nightmares.

Early the next morning, I was dealing with a

hangover, when I received a call on my beach phone. It was the captain of the *Beach Patrol* and he was in something of an uproar. Apparently, a number of good citizens had called various offices, at the newspaper, and in the local city government, including the mayor's office, about a mysterious drowning, on my area of beach, just north of the public fishing pier. Said calls also mentioned, that the lifeguard was asleep during the person's death. The captain was fit to be tied, and was screaming at me.

“Joey, I just got calls from a reporter and the mayor, telling me that a lot of people are saying, that just after one o'clock yesterday afternoon, they saw someone drown on one of your beaches, just north of the fishing pier, and that the guard was sleeping, when the person began to drown! What the fuck do you know about that, Joey? And, don't you dare lie to me! I need the truth, right now. This is too fucking serious for you to shine me on about. Did you or someone on your crew screw-up? Did one of your guards let some tourist go down, yesterday? And if so, why didn't you tell me about this?” *He doesn't really know anything for sure.*

Needless to say, being the consulate liar, that I

am, I was well prepared for the captain's inquisition. He assumed that something had happen, but didn't honestly know exactly, what it was. Since, no one had actually drowned, there was nothing he actually could have known... no body... no proof... there were a bunch of witnesses, but no body, and no one in truth had drowned. Ergo, he was 180 degrees out of phase about the drowning, and so I merely unleashed my ever present urge to lie.

“Captain, that story is completely ridiculous. You know how once a rumor gets started, how it can grow like crabgrass. Some young people just decided to spread a false rumor. How could I possibly hide the fact that someone died? We did a few practice pulls yesterday, and there were a few real ones, so maybe some tourists wrongly assumed someone had actually drowned. Honestly, Captain! That's drowning thing is completely ridiculous! Certainly the dead person's family would have said something. Did some family member call you, saying they'd lost someone? No! And, there's no way I could possibly cover-up a drowning, even if I wanted to. It's absolutely preposterous. The mayor and the reporter have been mislead by some pranksters or some tourists, who was confused! Captain, I definitely

would have known, if a drowning had occurred along my ten blocks. Is there a body at the morgue?"

"No! There's no body. I called the morgue, first thing. I suppose you're right, Joey. All this does seem pretty far fetched." The captain responded.

"You know captain, some people just love stirring-up shit! And once they get started, it can get blown-out way out of proportion. We also had two hairy pulls yesterday, but no deaths. Everyone lived, but one of them was close! Someone on the beach just saw the yesterday's events wrong. And, there was no sleeping guard. You know there's a lot of drunks on the beach. A drunk sees something, makes a stupid assumption, then goes back to the bar, and the next thing you know a rumor has been born. This thing is news to me, sir. Certainly, the dead person's family would have called the paper, the morgue, the police, or somebody. Don't you believe? If someone drowned, I swear, I don't know anything about it! May I burn forever in hell, if I'm lying! *I probably am anyway.*"

"I guess you're right, but there were about a half dozen reports phoned in!" The captain declared.

"I got to admit, that's a lot of people, but you

know about how ridiculous things can get started!” I responded.

Considering how many tourists had seen the fake drowning, I was well rehearsed for the captain’s call. In affect, I had deceived him, without actually lying, except for The Sandman sleeping.

[OBJ]



*Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit,
before a fall.*

-Proverbs 16:18

MY DEAD MAN

For a long time, I had been overly proud of the fact that no one had died on the ten blocks of my crew's beach, which my crew and I watched over, especially since it was the most dangerous area of beach on the eastern seaboard, if not the entire country. Tragically, one day that pride ended, on my section of beach, and during my watch, and the dead man was my victim... my responsibility! In appearance, the fellow was fairly nondescript, about forty-eight years of age, medium height, weight, and build, with short dark hair with just a touch of gray on the temples. He looked relatively intelligent and healthy, still he'd sustained a serious heart attack, while simply walking in the ankle deep shallows along the water's edge. The nondescript man was leisurely ambling along, looking down, as if he was

looking for sea shells, when suddenly he winced in pain, grabbed his left shoulder, then pitched forward face first, splashing-down, unconscious, into the shallow seawater. It was just as if he'd been knocked-out by a baseball bat. As deaths go, it started-out as a sudden heart attack, then he seemed to recover, and then things went wrong and greatly worsened.

As the man was falling, I jumped down from my guard tower, and ran to him, hurriedly rolled him over on his back, grabbed him up under his arms, and pulled him out of the water. Once I had him on the warm dry sand, I turned his body parallel to the shore, and onto a level spot, so I and another guard could better to perform CPR. The man was already pale, and a quick check indicated that he wasn't breathing, and there was no pulse. He appeared to have died just that fast... stone dead in an instant! What was good about his death was that it was free of fear, and contained only one brief pain. My mother would say, "It was his time." The bad thing about the death is that he was unable to say goodbye to his loved ones, allowing him to try to make things right, before checking-out, and making things right can entail a fair number of things. But, perhaps his life had been complete and he was ready to go, so he

didn't need to make any form of closure: no loans to be paid off, no will to be written, no apologies to be made, no last-minute advice to the children, etc.

As lifeguards, we were trained to assault death, beat it back, and never accept it. I had changed my perspective on death, since I attended military school, when one long night, I watched my roommate attempt to die from an overdose (an entire bottle of aspirin). As young guards, we felt that death had no place on our beach. After hurriedly brushing the sand away from his mouth and eyes, I gave the guy mouth-to-mouth, while Jack, another of my guards, rhythmically banged out chest compressions on the man's sternum, and the coastal cartilage was clearly snapping from either side of the breastbone. If I recall correctly, it was a fifteen to one ratio, back then, chest compressions to breaths. Of course over time, the ratio has occasionally changed; and now, I don't think the mouth-to-mouth is used, at all. Imaginably, that has something to do with the fear of various types of hepatitis and HIV, rather than the actual efficacy of the CPR. Once hepatitis and HIV are cured, the use of mouth-to mouth may reemerge. As mentioned, almost all pathogen-based diseases are curable, but once cured there goes big Pharma's

massive profits from their marginally effective treatments. For more information on that grandiose statement, read the later chapter, in one of these books, entitled, *My Brain Wakes-up*.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) may have been started in 1767, by a few civic-minded folks in Amsterdam. They formed a group called, *The Society for Recovery of Drowned Persons*. The name of the group seems a bit odd, maybe it's the word 'Society.' Within four years, the group claimed to have saved over 150 drowning victims, using the following strange techniques:

1. Warm the body.
1. Remove swallowed or aspirated water by positioning the victim's head lower than the feet.
1. Applying manual pressure to the abdomen.
1. Breathing into the victims mouth (mouth-to-mouth), or with a bellows.
1. Tickling the victim's throat.
1. Rectal or oral fumigation with tobacco smoke.
(*Who the hell came-up with that one?*)
1. Bloodletting. (*This was probably the idea of some sadist.*)

Taken from... *History of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*. online Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/
wikiHistory_of_cardiopulmonary_resuscitation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_cardiopulmonary_resuscitation)

Another of the guards ran to my phone-box and called the beach captain, asking him to send the ambulance. After about thirty-seconds of CPR, the man regained consciousness, and said something about his being okay, but he was a bit hard to understand. He had some type of thick foreign accent. I suggested that he just lie still, relax, not talk, and that the ambulance was coming. I made this clear to the man by gently pressing the palm of my hand on his chest, and placing the extended index finger of my other hand vertically across my lips. Unintentionally, I lied to him, when I'd said to him that he'd be okay.

The victim barely nodded, his understanding, laid on his back, and gazed-up at the blue sky, with its' slowly drifting white clouds. I hoped the victim would be fine, but in retrospect a part of me sort of knew he'd soon return to death. It was as if the man's

relaxed state had rudely interrupted some depressing pietistic rite, some ungodly design. It's hard to get much more depressive than death, but there are a few ways. One of them is immense shame, the likes of which I've known all too well. It's one of the reasons why seppuku or harakiri was sometimes practiced in Japan.

While waiting for the ambulance, I walked to the shoreline and rinsed-out my mouth, then washed my face, with the sea water. I was hoping the victim was going to make it, and at the time, was prematurely proud of myself. I felt the sin of pride swelling my chest. *One more pulled back from the grave!* If the ambulance had never come, and the poor victim had simply laid still, relaxing on the beach for a couple hours, he might have lived.

Things started going bad, when one of the ambulance attendants (they weren't called EMTs, then) showed-up and decided that the victim needed a 'tongue clamp,' a crude metal-tongue-guard installed in the victim's mouth. This device was a small two and a half inch metal clamp of sorts, designed to be placed in the victim's mouth to prevent him from swallowing his own tongue, should he become unconscious. I'd never seen one before,

and I don't think these devices are still around, and probably for the reason, I'm about to describe. The gadget clearly violated the first rule of medicine... First, do no harm. *Primum non nocere*.

My victim was fully conscious, relaxed, and able to speak, yet he remained silent, as I'd asked of him. Clearly, the man didn't need to have his tongue clamped in place, since he was in no danger of swallowing his tongue. For that matter, no one actually swallows their tongue, but the bulky mass of the tongue can fall backwards, and temporarily block air flow into the throat in some unconscious patients, but this happens fairly infrequently. In my youthful opinion, the poor victim was infinitely better off, without the cumbersome metal clamp jammed in his mouth, but the OCD ambulance attendant disagreed. In his mind, he was the authority. In reality, he was your basic control freak, and without any semblance of commonsense. Being a control freak, and having commonsense, often fail to commingle in the same three pounds of gray mush, and the need for control in some can far outweigh their commonsense.

Periodically, I've noticed that there is a type of person, who having attained a certain modicum of knowledge, and no matter how modest that

modicum, they then feel it qualifies them as some kind of authority, and therefore to be in full control. This is your basic a control freak. Most intelligent people generally realize how little they know and their limits, for three reasons. One, they have a rough understanding about how little is actually understood about reality. Secondly, they may better appreciate how much there is yet to be uncovered. Thirdly, of what is known how little of that wealth of knowledge they themselves understand. Perhaps in addition, they're more likely to confront the overwhelming dizzying concept of infinity, and their inability to appreciate it, with their limited three pounds of gray mush. Certainly, there are other reasons why a true authority is hard to find. The control freaks of the world are largely ignorant small-minded persons, though they be mildly intelligent, they often possess a disproportionately large ego, but have too little appreciation of the above three factors, and so armed with their limited information, they joyously inflict their insufferable control.

“Get out of my way. I’ve got to put this tongue clamp in his mouth, so he doesn’t swallow his tongue, if he stops breathing again.” The attendant bellowed at me, along with a few arcing micro-drops

of spittle.

“This poor guy is totally conscious, so why stick that weird metal contraction in his mouth? Just let the man relax. He’s okay, now! Let’s just gently load him on the stretcher and take him to the hospital.” I pleaded.

“You heard me. Get out of my way, lifeguard! You’re the lifeguard, and I’m in charge here! This is how it’s done.” He belligerently instructed.

He made this proclamation much too loudly, while intentionally shoving me to the side, when I wasn’t actually in his way. After watching his eyes track to a certain spot on the beach, I realized that all this bravado was probably done for the benefit of the nearby spectators, a few of which were sexy young women in bikinis. *He’s trying to look macho for those girls.* But the loud authoritative ambulance guy was also nervous and seemed slightly uncertain, whence he accidentally dropped the tongue clamp into the victim’s open mouth. The victim promptly choked on the small stainless steel device, then in his throat, causing him to violently cough and he tried to violently sit-up, but at that time he needed to be relaxing. Somehow, his painful choking triggered a deadly convulsive seizure. I say, ‘deadly,’ because his

heart had already failed once, and within a bit, the nondescript victim would again be dead, only this time for all eternity. Nevertheless, before he'd be officially pronounced dead, the poor marginally alive victim would undergo additional insults.

With the large metal tongue clamp suddenly and cruelly lodged in his throat, with the seizure, the skeletal muscles of the victim's entire body began to violently spasm, and his teeth were gnashing, as he once again lost consciousness. With that metal tongue clamp partially blocking his airway, the poor guy's brain, and his already damaged heart muscle, most likely weren't getting adequate oxygen. Moreover, the stress of the apparent seizure had torqued his heart rate well beyond red-line.

"Get that stupid tongue clamp out of his fucking throat!" I roared at the clumsy OCD ambulance attendant. *It's hard to reason with an authoritative idiot!*

"I can't reach into his mouth, until this seizure has stopped. Just be patient, lifeguard! Those teeth can bite your finger off." *Be patient? You've got to be joking!*

The dull-witted attendant said this through his

own clenched teeth. He stated this declaration, as if he were lecturing an ill-informed child. The imbecile seemed to be filled with hubris, and concerned with the nearby girls. At that moment, I loathed the man.

“Then move asshole, and let me, get it out of his throat!” I begged.

“No! Now stay out of my way, and just be patient. We’re going to have to wait for the seizure to stop!” He lectured me, rolling his eyes.

“His heart has already stopped once. We need to get that thing you dropped, out of his throat, now! The seizure and that thing blocking his throat are killing him!” I insisted.

“Not now! Just shut-up, and stay out of my way!” The ambulance attendant ordered.

Deep in my bones, I was firmly convinced that the stubborn ambulance attendant was determined to kill the convulsing victim. The way it looked to my teenage brain was that four things superseded the victim’s life: the medical rules, and the ambulance guy’s need to be in control, his need to impress the girls, and his fear of getting bitten. He looked at my victim choking, as if he was watching a pot, waiting for the water to boil... waiting for the seizure to

abate, or maybe he was just waiting for the victim to die! As I perceived the attendant, there was absolutely no compassion in his professionally tranquil expression. After about twenty-seconds of on-going non-stop seizure activity, where the victim wasn't passing significant air through his partially occluded throat, and was clearly changing color, I lost control, and hit the attendant, dead in his right temple, as hard as I could.

The OCD ambulance attendant never said a word; he just quietly fell unconscious onto the warm beach sand, alongside of my then shuttering victim. It wasn't until much later, that I would realize that two knuckles had broken in my right hand, having smashed them on the attendant's skull. One of those knuckles was the same one I'd hurt, hitting Lieutenant Morris in military school, a few years prior. Knocking the ambulance attendant unconscious had felt far too easy, much like when I'd hit Lieutenant Morris. The skull had felt uncannily soft, like I was hitting an inflated volleyball, instead of a hard boney skull; right then, there was no pain coming from the broken knuckles.

I've only knocked-out five guys in my entire life; ambulance guy was the third. Four of the guys were

true assholes and the fifth one was an aggressive schizophrenic, who had attacked me, because of a strange passing paranoid delusion, he was experiencing. While I knocked the schizophrenic out, and had therefore technically won that fight, after the fight was over, I certainly looked the worse for the wear. My face was a mess, and later required reconstructive surgery, since I'd managed to stop nearly every one of his punches, with my face, but without being knocked unconscious. After I'd knocked-out my schizophrenic attacker, the crowd, which had gathered around to watch the fight, wanted me to grab him by the hair and repeatedly bash his head into the concrete sidewalk, until his life winked-out; I didn't. By then, I'd learned the hard way that killing wasn't always a rewarding thing, especially if avoidable.

Kneeling-down in the sand, by the victim's head, I placed my left shin across the choking victim's forehead, and then using the heel of my left hand on his chin, I pushed down hard, forcing open the clenching lower jaw, as the seizure continued. This was easier than I thought it would be. With my weight pressed on the heel of my left hand firmly on his chin, to hold open the clenching jaw, I then used

the fingers of my right hand to move his tongue to one side, and fish out the metal tongue clamp from his throat. The simple little maneuver only took two-seconds. Still, before I could get my finger back out of his mouth, I lost the hold on his chin, and the victim managed to nip my index finger, just after the tongue clamp had been extracted. The finger yet carries the tiny scar in its' nail-bed, yet another symbol of my life's countless failures.

If it wasn't for that tiny scar, I probably wouldn't so frequently recall that unpleasant event. Sometimes when I look at the scar, I still see it as an open wound; just as it looked the day, one-second before it started to bleed, then I see the dead man, staring up at me with his vacant green eyes. It's part of a strange mini flashback, which oddly doesn't bother me, too much. Where those nightmares were pretty rough, flashbacks never really affected me significantly. They just happen, and then they're gone. The sight of the deadman's eyes only makes my heart ache for a brief moment or two, then I think about something else... no big deal; it does leave me a little tired. The nightmares were only bothersome in the sense that I didn't get enough sleep, and would feel a little depressed at times. I did somewhat fear

the nightmares, but I wasn't terrified of them.

With the metal tongue clamp removed from his throat, the seizure magically ceased; it was as if the metal device had actually been stimulating the seizure. Both Jack and I continued the CPR, yet despite our efforts, the guy would never regain consciousness. In the back of the ambulance on the five minute ride to the hospital, I was giving the victim mouth-to-mouth, while the poor guy involuntarily began to vomit beer in my mouth. But, when someone is dying, you don't mind the vomit. You just imagine it's your own vomit, and you spit it out, turn the victim's head to the side, and use your fingers to sweep-out their mouth, then you keep on breathing for him. Nevertheless, looking back, the beer vomit was nasty. For that reason, most of the lifeguards hated to see someone drinking beer on the beach. Beer vomit stinks. Most bars have that smell, along with the smell of urine soaked bathrooms. As a child drinking with Dad, I always loved the taste of beer. Working the beach ended that joy.

As lifeguards, we were officially deputized to arrest people for public fighting, drinking, or drunkenness, but we never did. Part of us liked to see people drinking on the beach, as long as they didn't

get too drunk, rude, or violent. If they did, we'd just threaten to arrest them, and that would usually solve the problem. If that didn't work, we'd gang-up on them, hold them down, and pour-out all their booze out onto the sand. Every so often, they'd threaten us, but nothing ever really came of it.

After a rescue, I'd rinse out my mouth with ocean water, then that evening, I'd drink straight whiskey to further wash out the memory taste, of the day's misery, usually with a side glass of water to attenuate the next morning's hangover. Once I actually rinsed my mouth-out with pure beach sand. I was laying on the beach. The sky was black. There were two incredibly tall wave-like sand dunes, one on either side of me. Somehow the dunes shifted, and I was suddenly buried alive. At first, I held my breath, but finally, I was forced to breathe-in the sand, and instantly, I was unburied. Then, the stars shone brightly. The sand in my mouth was dissolving as if it were sweet sugar, and filling me with a warmth. Standing-up I saw there were identical corpses lined-up on the beach, all laying on their backs, arms at their sides, legs together, all shoulder-to-shoulder. They were all men, wearing the same plain bathing suits. I woke-up and went to the

kitchen for a glass of water, then walked around the neighborhood till sunup, then walked to work on the beach. Like I said, being an ocean guard gave me nightmares; especially, toward the end of the season. Sleeping was always hard enough, without the nightmares, one of life's unsettling little punishments, but at the same time, they keep you sane.

Dreams bleed out life's little insanities.

Toys for All Time by Roy Earl Mills,
Ph.D.

The ambulance raced toward Ocean City's excuse for a hospital. Ambulances actually broke the speed limit back then, as well as shot through stop signs and red lights. Now, ambulances are frequently slower than the routine traffic. How many times have I seen an ambulance in my rearview mirror, a few blocks behind me, and as the time goes by, I leave it in the dust?

In the back of the ambulance, Jack and I worked on the victim, while fighting to maintain our balance, as it weaved in and out of cars. The ambulance

attendant, I'd momentarily knocked-out, was angrily sitting in the passenger seat, up front, saying nothing. At the time, I believed he didn't realize he'd been knocked-out. While Jack and I were loading the victim in the back, he'd woken-up, brushed himself off, and climbed in the front passenger seat. Later, I'd find out that he had filed a complaint with the hospital about me, but not a formal complaint with the police, or with the beach patrol. However, the doctor was going to file a complaint about me with the beach patrol, because of something I was about to do, yet nothing came of it. The other attendant, who'd seen me hit his partner, must have told him what I had done. Most likely, the OCD attendant, I'd knocked-out, now works as an administrator for some hospital. Administrators are one of my pet peeves. They're too often fools, who live for their career and to control others!

Finally, the ambulance pulled up to the back door of the hospital. Jack grabbed the front of the stretcher, I popped the rear ambulance door open, grabbed the other end of the stretcher, and we carried the victim out of the ambulance, and in through the back double-doors of the medical center, where just inside, and shoulder-to-shoulder, stood a

smiling doctor and a frowning nurse. Both were dressed in starch white uniforms, looking well scrubbed. *At last, professional help!* Foolishly, I assumed that the victim could depend on them to save him, but the victim would have been better off had we just left him on the beach.

“Which room shall we put him in?” The nurse asked the smiling doctor. *He must be good, if he can smile, during this emergency!*

“Let’s see what’s available?” The smiling doctor suggested.

The ambulance has a radio, so they should have been ready! While it is important to remain cool under pressure, it soon became obvious that those two slow-witted sloths were woefully unprepared, and while Jack and I were waiting, holding the ends of the stretcher, I noticed that without CPR, the victim was slowly turning ashen. No oxygen was going into his body; hence the color change, and the damaged heart continued to go without oxygen, no doubt deteriorating. The doctor and nurse then began a fairly apathetic stroll down the narrow hallway of the emergency area. Jack and I followed right behind them, still carrying the victim on the stretcher. Why doesn’t the doc hurry? Don’t seconds count?

“We could put him in room number eight.” The nurse pointed to a vacant room. The doctor looked in

at it for a few seconds. *Make-up your fucking mind, doc!* Then, he slowly began to nod his approval.

“I guess this’ll do. You two (Jack and I) just put him up there; then stay out of my way.” The doctor commanded.

He was pointing at a large gurney, without the usual side rails, covered in a white sheet, which looking back, looked like a sacrificial altar in the middle of a cramped little nondescript white room. As ordered, Jack and I put the stretcher and its’ victim, atop the gurney. The blatant whiteness of the room gruesomely contrasted with the darkening color of the victim’s skin, which then made me flash on Tommy’s severed head in the bowling bag, as well as the two guys, who had been machine-gunned to death in Spain that late afternoon, nine years before. They too had quickly changed color... *life is one color, death another.*

“Shall I hook-up the electrodes, doctor?” The nurse inquired.

“Yeah, let’s hurry; he doesn’t look too good to me.” The observant physician wisely proclaimed. *No shit, Einstein! Get a move on!*

But, while he had uttered the word, ‘hurry,’ there

was no hurry in their ministrations. It seemed as if the doctor and his nurse were moving in a thick warm syrup. After a few more minutes, the EKG was still not functioning. The doc kept gazing at the TV monitor, but the anticipated spiky electromagnetic waves refused to materialize. At that point, a knot of frustration had formed in my lower abdomen. The doc looked puzzled, the nurse continued to look clueless, and the patient continued to darken, and was likely teetering on the edge of death.

Since arriving at the hospital, the victim had received no CPR, and so no oxygen had been going to his tissues. Pallor mortis occurs because of the collapse of capillary circulation in the skin. Jack and I had been ordered to stand aside, while the physician attempted to get the EKG working. The doc continued to study the EKG dilemma. *What the fuck is wrong with these two folks?* The big clock on the wall suddenly seemed to loudly tick, and the space between each tick seemed twice too long.

“Oh my, I think I know what the problem is. The man’s on that metal stretcher, and it’s interfering with the signal.” The brilliant doctor finally deduced this fact, so the nurse blindly nodded her agreement, while the ever darkening patient said nothing. *I*

wonder if the guy can hear what's going on?

Jack and I immediately stepped-up to the altar. I lifted the patient, while Jack yanked-out the stretcher, leaving the iron gray man laying on his back atop the stark white altar, and low-and-behold, the doc was right, because the EKG began to function. But instead of a nice classic QRST series of cardiac waves, the waves appeared to be far too fast, spiky, and just random.

“His heart’s in fibrillation.” The doctor accurately proclaimed.

Hooray, I guess this fibrillation means that this guy is still alive! Basically, fibrillation means that the muscle cells of dying man’s heart were still contracting, but not in proper synchronized rhythm, ergo the heart was not effectively pumping blood; hence, the gray skin continued to dim. The man’s heart was like the proverbial ‘bag of worms,’ with each tiny heart muscle cell contracting and wiggling to its own rhythm. While this is highly dangerous, I was at least happy to know that the guy was showing some sign of life, so in my mind, there was still a ray of hope!

“We need to defib this guy. Where is the

defibrillator?” The doc queried the nurse, who then seemed to enter into a mental fog.

She's got no idea where the defibrillator is.

“I don't know. It's somewhere around.” The dutiful nurse at last admitted, touching her right index finger to her temple.

Are you kidding me... 'somewhere around?'

Her pristine white uniform was in stark contrast to her cerebral persona. But instead of looking for the device, she threw both her arms wide, palms to the sky, and simply shrugged her narrow shoulders. *Holy shit! Is this for real? Am I in some ridiculous dream?* She then placed her left palm on her left hip, and touched the index finger of her right hand on the tip of her chin and rubbed, while she frowned. *I guess this means she's thinking.* The doctor only watched her. *These two are worthless.* The nurse then looked up and presented a questioning expression, as if she's theatrically trying to recall the location of the defibrillator. Miraculously, after several more wasted seconds, she did manage to remember its' location.

“Oh, I think I recall seeing it out in the hallway, with all those new boxes, which were just delivered, today.” She miraculously blurted-forth.

At this point, my thoughts silently screamed-out, ‘*Well, go get it, you stupid moron!*’ As if she could hear my thoughts, the vapid nurse calmly walked into the hall in search of the defibrillator, without the slightest hurry in her step. You might have thought she was just going to get a drink of water. I followed behind her. In the hall were three stacks of cardboard boxes, and sitting underneath one of those stacks was the defibrillator. She pointed-out the device, a light green metal box.

“There it is.” She triumphantly declared, slowly strolling to it.

The defibrillator had a half dozen or so cardboard boxes, presumably containing various types of medical equipment, stacked on top of it. The nurse began to slowly and methodically unstack the boxes, one-at-a-time, slowly and carefully re-stacking each box, on the other side of the narrow hallway. She became aware that I was closely scrutinizing how slowly she was moving, and so she rewarded me with a condescending sneer; her lips pushed toward one side of her mouth, as she squinted. *Could she possibly waste any more time; after all, the man’s only dying? It’s only life.* In those days, I was big into rock and roll, so I was forced to recall the last stanza of a

Bob Dylan song, which was only about four or five years old, then. Perhaps this untimely recollection was owing to the fact that memories are arranged in various types of logical and illogical fashions. Perhaps the more illogical the connections it elicits, the better the poet.

And if thought-dreams could be seen
They'd probably put my head in a guillotine
But it's alright, Ma, it's life, and only life.

From the song, *It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)*... by Bob Dylan

The defibrillator, the nurse had pointed-out, was a plain looking light green cubital metal box, about two feet on each of its' twelve edges. Reaching under the stacks of boxes, I hurriedly grabbed the green box, and yanked it out, thereby sending the remaining boxes crashing to the floor, causing the nurse to give me a harsh peevish stare.

A man is dying and she wants to get pissed! Jesus Christ! She looks so stupid!

“Just look what you’ve done!” The heavily starched pretend caregiver viciously shrieked at me.

Get over it!

“At least, I’m doing something, and not moving like a snail, while a man dies.” I angrily responded... *nothing like having a moron trying to save lives.*

“Well!” The insulted starched microcephalic countered.

Neither the doctor, nor the nurse, seemed to comprehend that time was of the essence, that seconds made the difference, between the big three choices: a normal life, a life with brain and heart damage, and good ole dependable death, the latter two strongly mandated that the doctor and nurse stop wasting time. Not waiting for the inane nurse to accompany me, I dashed back into the tiny room, placing the defibrillator on a stainless steel cart, adjacent to the gray man’s altar, then stepped back, giving the doctor room to work. *Do your thing doc, but do it fast.* The doctor appeared extremely relaxed.

Maybe the doc and nurse have been dipping into the hospital pharmacy.

“Here we go!” The doctor announced, with anticipation elevating his brows, just as the nurse

returned to the room to continue giving me the stink-eye. *Honestly, a man's dying, and she needs to give me the stink eye...*

The doc opened two small doors on the front of the green metal box, extracted the two electrode paddles, with their insulated plastic handles, and each with an attached light green tightly coiling insulated wire. The doc placed one electro-paddle high on the right side of gray man's chest, just below his collar bone, and the other paddle lower down by gray man's left nipple. *The light green color of this defibrillator is the only pleasant thing about this room.* Everything in the room was white, or stainless steel, and the patient a depressing ashen gray.

"Clear!" The doc loudly warned, indicating that we all should step away, as he squeezed the trigger, yet when he did nothing happened! There was no zap... nothing... no electric current flowed! *Could anything else possibly go wrong?* The doctor frowned for a few seconds, then blurted-out his conspicuous deduction.

"Something's just not right, here!"

For all I know, this overly casual idiot doesn't have a medical license.

As it turned-out, what was wrong with the machine was something of a tricky brain teaser, a true conundrum of eminence proportions. The mysterious current flow problem went unsolved, for several more precious seconds, as the poor victim's life continued to slip away. The doctor then adroitly solved the bewildering puzzle of the defunct defibrillator.

“It's not plugged-in!” He loudly proclaimed.

Give him a Nobel Prize!

This was the fourth dazzling blunder the clinician had voiced; first their not having a room selected for the victim, second the metal stretcher, blocking the EKG recording, and then there was their not knowing the location of the defibrillator, and fourth that it was not plugged-in. You might be surprised just how many MDs have to gone through drug and/or alcohol rehabs, or maybe you wouldn't.

By then, the nondescript victim was nearly battleship gray, with a slight yellowish tinge around his eyes and mouth, yet according to the EKG, his heart was still fibrillating, still somewhat alive! *There's still some hope!* But unfortunately, the amplitude of the spikes seemed shorter and the

distance between them slightly wider. *His heart is dying?* The victim's skin seemed to declare that he was dead, but where there's fibrillation, there's still a flicker of hope, or so I thought.

Hurriedly, I found and pulled open another small door on the back of the box, and low and behold there was a long black cord with a plug, so I jammed it into the nearest wall socket. Because of the hidden cord, I had wrongly assumed the device was battery powered; after all, it was the first time, that I'd actually seen a defibrillator.

The first defibrillator was used in 1899 by Jean-Louis Prevost and Frederic Batelli. The two men worked at the University of Geneva as research physiologists. They proved that electric current could both induce and rectify fibrillation in canines. The idea was one of the world's simplest brain farts, but it's saved countless lives. Now automated external defibrillators are found in many businesses, and industries, where frequently, each employ is given a quick course in how to operate it.

For the second time, the hospital physician loudly ordered, "Clear!" He had again positioned the paddles, pulled the trigger, and that time the current flowed into the patient, but the EKG sadly flat lined,

no more fibrillation! The promising shock of the defibrillator appeared to have stopped the poor man's heart! *The damn shock killed him!* The doctor's face still showed no emotion.

“Oh, well!” Is all the doctor said.

Oh, well? Are you shitting me?

For a fraction of a second, I thought of the old movie *Frankenstein*, where the ridiculous homemade monster was placed on a platform, hoisted up through the roof and into the storm, where the lightning bolts brought the creature back to life. Granted the story was pure fiction and the monster was crudely assembled, stitched together like a child's doll; still, the electricity had brought it to life. Please bare-in-mind that weird piece of logic may have been owing to the fact that I was young, and pretty much stressed to the max!

Gray man is just barely dead, compared to Frankenstein's monster... so, the electric shock should have worked!

While at that time, I'd no higher education, and felt a tad of truth existed in my adolescent reasoning. In perplexed despair, I looked at the magic light green cuboid defibrillator for help. On the front of

the box was a gauge showing something called the, 'mill-watts.' I didn't understand what a mill-watt was, but assumed that the gauge indicated the amount of electric juice, being delivered through the squeezed paddles and into the patient's body.

The large cone-shaped mill-watt gauge on the front of the defibrillator was divided into a green zone and a red zone, half green and half red. The indicating needle could be moved into either the green zone or in a red zone, by simply turning a big black knob on the front of the box. While looking at this gauge, I noticed that the needle was set in the gauge's green zone. Then, I saw that the green zone was labeled, for 'INTERNAL USE.' So, I supposed that it was for use during surgery, when the lesser current would be used inside the opened body, perhaps being applied directly onto the heart, itself. The red half of the gauge was labeled for 'EXTERNAL USE,' presumably, when the paddles are used on the outside of the chest, requiring greater current to penetrate the chest wall to force contraction of the heart muscle. Disturbingly, the position of the needle, indicated that the machine had been set in the green zone for internal use, when the doctor had administered the external shock! *Holy shit! Maybe*

that's why the guy's heart stopped!

“Doc, you’ve got the fucking setting wrong! Look... it’s in the green zone for ‘internal use.’ It needs to be in the red zone labeled for external use.” I yelled, pointing at the red and green gauge on the front of the box.

Just as I said this, The Captain of the *Beach Patrol*, stepped into the unpleasant little white room. It seemed odd to be seeing him in the emergency room, instead of on the beach. The Captain was like a cross between Commander McHale of the TV series *McHale’s Navy*, and jolly old Saint Nicholas. The captain was a big rugged outdoors man, but with a heart of pure gold; the perfect type of man to lead the one hundred and ten young male lifeguards, a tough caring father figure, and a man you could trust to make the right decision. Good leaders are rare as hen’s teeth, especially on the federal and political levels. This might be due to the fact that self-serving ego maniac’s, tend to strive for positions of power, whereas those who actually possess the required characteristics to be good leaders are generally not as concerned with becoming a leader.

“Sure enough!” The doctor agreed, having looked at the green and red gauge. The nurse glared, again

giving me the major stink-eye, while her upper lip began curling-up, as if the doctor's oversight had somehow been mine, or that I was a jerk for pointing-out the doctor's error. *She's got to be fucking the doc!* I assumed that the doc had to be new at the job. Women will defend anyone, who's giving them great sex; especially, if the guy also makes a lot of money. The list of mate selection characteristics is long: honesty, integrity, communication skills, goodness, love, money, intelligence, sexual prowess, courage, etc. Now days, it seems that too many of America's young women select guys based on money and sex.

The doctor said nothing, but just turned the defibrillator's black knob so as to move the indicating needle from the green internal zone, into the middle of the red external zone. The doc then repositioned the paddles on the victim's chest, and for the third time yelled, "Clear." He squeezed the paddle triggers and fired-off the electric current. This time the machine functioned properly. The body slightly arched up, off the white altar, but the EKG sadly continued to be flatlined. The dead body then looked drastically different, an even darker gray, with a slightly waxy appearance its' the epidermis. As

mentioned, the face had tinges of yellow. The victim's mouth hung open and the lower jaw had recessed backwards, toward the neck, like it was unhinged, as if the man had said, "I'm tired of all this stupidity! Can't you see, I'm dead! Let me be!"

"That's it! I'm calling it!... Time of death... 2:15 p.m." The doctor announced, after having glanced at the wall clock, thereby officially declaring the nondescript man to be dead. *It really is all about time, and this is the end for him... 2:15... times up!* Then, I realized that I didn't even know the victim's name, but I could still taste his beer vomit! The bitter taste caused me to reflectively spit on the floor, causing the captain to frown at me. Likely, everyone in the room thought I was spitting to show my disdain. Maybe, unconsciously I was.

The doctor had uttered the death notice, so matter of factly, he might as well have said, "It's time to go to lunch." There was no hint of emotion, no regret... not too different from the indifference the ambulance attendant had shown on the beach, refusing to extract the tongue clamp, for fear of getting bitten. At this point, I was more than slightly angry and made the foolish, but determined, decision to 'not' control my rage. *I've got to do something!*

There was nothing to lose at that point, since the victim was then ‘officially’ dead! The good Captain looked solemn, his head respectfully bowed, and his large hands clasped in front of his ample belly. The moronic nurse had decided it was best to just stare at the ceiling.

“Fuck you, you incompetent bastard.” The profanity unexpectedly slipped passed my lips at around 140 decibels, after stepping in close, to the doc’s complacent face.

The paddles in his hands were almost touching my ribs; ergo, I snatched them from his bungling hands, and barely managed to suppress an overwhelming desire to hit him across the face, with the paddles. The captain just spoke my name.

“Joey?”

“Hey! What are you doing?” The doctor yelled, stepping back, since I now held the paddles and was clearly filled with an uncontrollable fury.

Feeling extremely loose, I had blood in my eye. Sometimes, there’s something to be said for acting without a clear plan of action, just going with the flow of emotion, without controlling one’s self, but other times such responses can be perilous. I wanted

the doc to hit me, so I could repeatedly return the favor, dead in his uncaring face, but he knew better. He just blinked, and backed up a few feet. Pound for pound, I was a strong young man, and at that instant, I was fully aware of my desire to use my strength. I was partially being driven by guilt, since I never should have let the ambulance attendant get near the victim, never should have allowed the moron to put the tongue-clamp in the victim's mouth. In fact, I shouldn't have allowed the poor guy to be put in the ambulance. I should have simply insisted that the victim lay on the warm sand, and relax. *He might have made it, if I'd just stopped this medical circus.* But naively, I did what I had been taught to do, except for knocking-out the moron.

“This poor man deserves one more chance! You and your God damn idiotic nurse, and that pigheaded ambulance guy. You all killed this man. Sure as shit, you all killed him! Own it, you fucking fools! What's really bad about this is that you don't really give a shit! Fuck you!” I angrily announced.

As I was yelling those words, I was reaching out and turning the black adjustment knob all the way up to the maximum setting, while then positioning both paddles, as I had seen the doctor do. I didn't

bother to yell, “Clear,” since everyone had already moved well back. The captain stood there trying to understand what was happening, and what I was talking about. What I’d overlooked in my teenage rage was that my right hip was leaning on the patient’s right side, not-to-mention that both the dead man and I were still wet with salt water, from having just been in the ocean, and electricity does love salt water!

When I squeezed the trigger, that time the body more violently arched high upward, then it crashed down off the side of the gurney, landing hard on the linoleum floor. Concurrently, I was thrown backwards into a stainless steel cabinet, and for a fraction of a second, I felt better, less angry. Then I saw the doctor’s disaffected face, and I was instantly livid, again. The EKG electrodes had detached from the victim’s body. The nurse was now looking at the dead man. I could never imagine what it must be like to be a doctor, having to watch people die regularly, whether it was your fault or not. Had I become a physician, I probably would have constantly lived with *PTSD*; besides, I make far too many mistakes to ever consider such a job! As you’ve no doubt learned from reading these texts, I’m often one big mistake

just waiting to happen.

Then, the incompetent physician stepped-up in front of me, and said, “Look what you’ve done!”

That was another of the doctor’s mistake. The comment was the equivalent of throwing jet fuel on a flame. Standing-up off the floor, I stepped-up to his face.

“Fuck you, you poor excuse for a doctor. I shocked myself and knocked a dead body on the ground, but you literally killed that man; you worthless piece of shit! You piss poor excuse for a doctor! You didn’t even know which room to put him in, when we first got here, none of the equipment was ready, and your nurse is a fucking idiot, just like you. You didn’t know where the defibrillator was, or how to hook-up the EKG. At first try, you didn’t even have it plugged in! You had it on the wrong setting, and so you stopped the man’s heart. Jesus... you’re a useless idiot! And, you dare get mad at me? Get the fuck out of my way, before I kick your worthless ass clean through that wall! Now! Back the fuck up, you God damned quack.” It was the most erudite response, I could muster.

Please bare-in-mind, I was only nineteen and had

never had a victim die, before. The confused captain half-heartedly tried to control me.

“Now, calm down, Joey.”

“Fuck you too, Captain.” But, I’d lowered my volume, because I didn’t mean it.

I found it impossible to get angry with such a good man. He was a man of integrity. The captain just shook his head. Somewhere inside his mind, he knew I had just reason for my tirade. The captain then stared hard at the doctor, and it wasn’t a friendly stare. Without saying a word, he glared at the doctor and his nurse, indicating that he had clearly sided with me, despite what I’d just said to him.

Finally, shoving the doctor hard into the wall and out of my way, I stormed out, ran four blocks to the East, and dove into the surf, washed-out my mouth, cried underwater, where no one could see me, and then I slowly jogged south for a few miles, down the beach to my old unpainted wooden lifeguard stand. Some of the guards would call-out to me, as I ran by, but I’d just elevate my right hand to acknowledge them, and keep going. I couldn’t accept that the man had been allowed to die, without an

honest fight to save him, and with no apparent caring. And yes, part of my frustration was owing to my pride. My record of no drownings was broken.

It then seemed that no one on earth cared about anyone; that the death of a person was of no real consequence. *Do any of us really matter?* For some reason, his death had affected me more than the death of the two teens in the little yellow *Opel* in Spain. The man's death diminished me, and not just because my perfect rescue record, but because for the moment that the attendant had dropped the tongue clamp, I knew the victim should have remained on the beach, and yet I'd obliged the ambulance crew. Once back on my stand, I sat there for a good thirty minutes, eyes closed, letting the guards on either side cover my beach. I was a useless slug. I suddenly realized that what I was then going through, was similar to what I had put the poor Sandman through, just a few days, prior. *This is my karma.* A few years later, I would experience a lover's death, and that was a whole new level of hell, and many years after that, I would deal with the devastating death of my dear Dad. The death of others, and the love of a child, hammers and shapes your metal. Even so, I'm still misshapen, and probably need considerably

more hammering, to become a deceit human being. Maybe it's the last hammer blow, which best determines the shape of my wanting soul.

Having calmed down, I was thinking about going to the nearest bar, starting and finishing with shots of whiskey. Sitting on my stand, and thinking about the tragic events of the day, I noticed the two broken knuckles of my right hand, and my slightly bleeding bitten index finger, which had finally begun to throb. The ache of the knuckles and the throbbing of my bitten finger were good things; they distracted me from thinking about the dead man. I was filled with anger, and sorrow for the deadman. A few minutes later, it was almost time for Max the Channel Swimmer to come swimming around the end of the rock-pile, when unbeknownst to me, someone suddenly arrived at the foot of my stand.

“Pardon me.” A female voice spoke.

Her words jarred me out of my funk. Opening my eyes, I moved my feet out of the way, looked down, and there stood a beautiful petite dark haired woman about forty-eight years old, accompanied by six kids of various ages, and nearby, a frail and stooped tiny older white haired lady. The two women, as well as the kids all carried shopping bags, as if they'd been

shopping for hours, most likely up on the boardwalk. Pulling my forearm across my wet eyes, I waited for her to speak.

The dark haired beauty said, "I've been walking up and down this beach and the boardwalk, looking for my husband, and can't find him."

The woman continued with a description of him, which of course was identical to that of the poor deadman. *This is his wife and kids, and probably his mother, or mother-in-law!* They'd been shopping, while he had stayed on the beach to have his heart attack, and to then be killed by the inept ambulance attendant, and incompetent doctor. Unable to tell her what had happened, I simply climbed down off the stand to go phone the beach captain, who was then back in his office.

"Excuse me for a moment, ma'am. Let me get someone, who can help you locate your husband." I truthfully stated, as I came to realize that I'd been indulging in too much self-pity.

Opening the phone box, I lifted the receiver and I was automatically connected with the captain, who angrily answered. Before I could utter a single word, he started yelling at me about how much trouble I

was in for hitting the ambulance attendant, and for the way I had yelled at, and shoved, the doctor.

“I suppose you’ve called, because you think you can apologize your way out of this thing, Joey. Well, let me tell you...” He lectured, but I promptly cut him off, without raising my voice.

“There’s something a more important than the stupid ambulance attendant, and the worthless doctor, right now.” I quietly declared, shielding my conversation from the woman, and totally shocking the captain, who was wrongfully expecting to be hearing my apology, and not to be interrupted.

My comment silenced him. Till that day, he’d never known me to be impolite, or fire back at him, so he knew something was wrong.

“And what the hell might that be, Joey?” He asked with a heavy dollop of sarcasm, ready to do phone battle, and if need be, fire me.

“You need to get down here, fast. I’m not dealing with the dead guy’s wife, six kids, and his mother-in-law, and yes, at this very moment, the eight of them happen to be here at my stand, wondering where the deadman is! They haven’t got a clue about what happened, and I’m not saying shit to them! They’re

all yours, Captain. You get to deliver the bad news. This is way above my pay-grade. I'm only telling her that you are on the way to assist her in finding her husband. I won't be at my stand, when you get here. They'll be here, waiting for you, here by the phone box." I explained.

Of course, I said this quietly, while cupping my mouth to the receiver, so no one in the dead man's family could hear me. The captain did a complete reversal, from exasperated aggression to earnest concern. Like I said he was a very good man.

"Holy Christ! Tell the poor lady to stay right there! I'm on my way!" He ordered, and the line went dead.

In reality, the captain was the best man for the wretched job of breaking the news to the family. Besides, after my depressing experience with the victim, the ambulance attendant, and the crazy nurse and doctor, I was out of commission, and ready to do some serious drinking. Turning to the widow, I mentioned that the captain would be coming to assist her, that people frequently got lost on the beach, and to just stay there by the phone box, but I noticed that she was studying my red eyes and strained features. *Oh shit, she knows! I've got to get out of here, before she*

asks questions! A morose edge of suspicion began to creep into her beautiful olive face, slightly narrowing her gaze and tightening her lips, turning them down on the corners. They were the same lips, which might soon kiss a cold gray corpse, somewhere in that poor excuse for a hospital. Not wanting to allow her time to question me, I turned and walked away.

“I’ve got to go talk to one of my guards. Just wait right here. The captain is coming. He’ll be here to help you, soon. Finding lost people is his thing.” I lied, as I walked away down the beach, to avoid scrutiny.

Scanning my section of the water, to make sure that no one was in trouble, then continued to walk toward the neighboring guard tower, thereby avoiding the widow. I never looked to see how she was reacting. I only noticed that she was talking with the older lady. All I wanted was to have a drink. The captain arrived shortly, driving his big white panel van, with the words ‘*Beach Patrol*’ stenciled across its sides. The eleven blue letters were comically tilted in different directions. It was a happy and silly looking large passenger van on a sorrowful mission. The captain loaded the eight family members on board the van, and drove them back to his office, where a

local priest was on stand-by, to help him deliver the bad news.

Once I was off work, I quickly explained to Ann what had happened, and that I needed to be alone, then I went straight to the liquor store, bought a couple bottles of *Coca-Cola*, and a fifth of *Beam*. With the traditional brown paper bag, I returned to my stand, to drink and watch the waves, and then to drink some more, and watch the moon ascend into the darkening sky. I drank steadily enough to reduce the events of the day, but just slowly enough to prevent nausea.

Medicinal drinking is a balancing act, a biochemical art of sorts, best done alone. The next morning, I awoke with the first rays of the rising sun, laying in the sand at the foot of my stand, but far too fried to work the beach. After a quick dip in the surf to clean-up and rinse out my mouth, I walked to the nearest pay-phone, called the captain, and lied. I told him that I thought I had the flu. As soon as he acknowledged my pseudo-illness, I hung-up to avoid further discussion. There was no doubt he knew I was lying, yet he also understood, and wasn't offended by the lie.

Walking home, I slurped some water from an

outside water facet, bought a cold beer for a dime, at a small corner grocery. Then, I went in the store's bathroom, sat on the toilet seat, and sipped the cold brew, taking the edge off the hang-over. Once home, I drank a little more water from the sink, then threw-up in the commode, rinsed out my mouth, sipped a little cool water, then crashed in my bed. Being so young, I was good to go by that evening. Drinking like that at my current age, would probably kill me.

About a month had passed, since the nondescript victim had died, and I was sitting on my stand, bored out of my gourd. It had been an uneventful day, but that was soon to change. From the stress, booze, and nightmares, I had become extremely thin. With the lower air temperatures and the fewer people coming to the beach, you could tell autumn was coming soon. After a hot summer, with its' exhausting rescues, the coming of fall seemed sweeter than the anticipation of childhood Christmas.

Unexpectedly, a tall middle-aged gentleman, wearing a well tailored three-piece black suit, a starched white shirt, a red tie, complete with gold cufflinks and tie-tack, and shiny brown leather wing-tipped shoes, came strolling, from beneath the pier. In the land of water, sand, and swimwear, he looked

solidly out-of-place, and was he heading directly toward my stand. *I'd say he's a politician. Maybe he wants my vote.* Trying to walk on the sand with slippery soled wingtips was causing the suit to periodically frown, and frequently change his gate. *I hope I never have to dress like that. I'd just as soon be a clown.* Finally standing in front of my stand and looking up at me, I could see that the dapper man, had about a pound of white beach sand in each of his pants cuffs. He introduced himself and informed me that he was the dead man's family attorney, for a wrongful death suite. At that time, I still didn't know the victim's name, but the attorney clued me in.

He took-out his handkerchief and dabbed his sweaty pale forehead, and squinted. The contrast was stark, the older heavy set man in a three piece, standing in fancy wingtips, and me, a skinny young man in a speedo, and barefoot. It was evident that we were each glad that we weren't the other, but we had a common interest, and for that reason, we enjoyed each other's company. He spoke, attempting to determine if there existed adequate grounds for a civil action, against either the ambulance or the hospital. I agreed to let him take me to lunch, so I selected an expensive seafood restaurant. Waiting for

our food to arrive, I started out with the famous rhetorical question.

“Have I got a story for you?”

“I’m all ears, kid. Tell me what you can recall about that day. ” He smiled his response.

“I can recall exactly what happened, but I wish I could forget it.”

He made a few notes, and posed a series of questions. Near the end of the meal, I closed the lengthy detailed story.

“Well, if you need me, you’ve got my number and my address, both at the beach and back home in Alexandria, Virginia. I’m definitely looking forward to testifying, for the family. I don’t care about what I did to the ambulance guy, or that worthless doctor. We don’t get long for lunch, and I’ve got to get back to the stand, before the captain fires me. And please, don’t mention any of this to the captain. He’s a good man, but he’s friends with the mayor, and you’re suing the hospital, if not the city. It won’t affect me, because I won’t be coming back next year... enough is enough. I can’t take anymore nightmares.”

The lawyer asked to meet again the following evening. I meant him in the lobby of his hotel, where

over brandy, we once more reviewed the unfortunate events. This time, he took copious notes, and had even purchased a small tape recorder, about the size of a cigar-box, with two three inch clear plastic tape-reels. I was so glad that I wasn't him... a slave to money, who had to wear a three piece suit, with slippery hard soled shoes. *That suit has got to be like a straight-jacket.* Later the next day, the attorney interviewed Jack, my neighboring guard, who had helped to work on the unfortunate victim that fateful day.

Since The Captain had also been at the hospital, albeit only at the very end, the attorney asked to interview him, but The Captain had refused to speak with him. The Captain had to remain loyal to the city. Later, the captain only pretended to be angry with Jack and me, for having talked with the lawyer, telling us not to tell anyone else about speaking with the attorney. He insisted that the mayor was going to go ballistic, and probably slash the beach patrol budget. The captain preferred to let the mayor find out about the lawsuit via the attorney, after the lifeguard season was over, and the money had been appropriated for the next season.

I always wanted to go drinking with the captain

to see how he really felt about certain things (drugs, politics, women, medicine, etc.), but he wasn't a social drinker. Near the end of the summer, both Jack and I were driven, by one of the law firm's clerks, to Annapolis, where in the library of the prestigious law-firm, we gave sworn depositions, while seated at a long beautifully finished teak conference table, made from a section of the deck of some famous sunken sailing ship of the 1800s. *Considering the trappings of this firm, this must be a huge suit.* Five groups of attorneys were present, those representing: the family of the dead man, the ambulance service, the doctor, the city, and the hospital. Jack and I were formally deposed. The city wasn't targeted in the suit; nevertheless, they had an attorney there, who never spoke, just listened. The attorneys for the ambulance service, the doctor, and the hospital did make indirect threats, by asking me, if I recalled that I had: knocked-out the ambulance attendant, taken and used the hospital's defibrillator, and behaved in a disruptive and threatening manner, by yelling at, and physically shoving, the doctor. My response to those question was brief.

“Sure I remember, but I feel I should have done more! Please will one of you over-paid troglodytes

just let me get on the witness stand, so I can tell my side of the story to a jury! I want to angrily describe what it was like watching a man being needlessly allowed die that day, because of the morons, you think are defending. Those clowns are far from being professionals... the ambulance attendant, the nurse, and the doctor, are more like Larry, Moe, and curly, except *The Three Stooges* don't actually kill people! Have any of you ever thought about how hard it was for me to watch that man needlessly die. You see gentlemen, the man was alive, until those clowns you represent showed-up to supposedly care for him, so please sue me, or press criminal charges, so I can get an attorney and counter sue, for all I've been put through! And then, there's the minor fact that he had six kids! Now, if you don't mind, let's get this Q and A over with, so I can get away from you greedy monsters. Again, remember that, in my mind, your clients literally killed a man, so no matter what you say about me, what I did that afternoon will forever be comparatively insignificant, and frankly I am proud of what I did.

Yeah, I know it's just your irritating blood sucking jobs, but do you guys ever hate yourselves for doing what you do? I'm not talking about you (I

said gesturing to the family's attorney.). I fully realize that attorneys don't generally have a conscience. And while, I don't have one either, unlike you, I don't try to hide the fact. But I repeat, that I am not kidding when I say, I welcome your legal attack on me, since it will absolutely guarantee me my day in court, and I so desperately want the opportunity to describe all the stupid inexcusable events of that terrible day to some jury!" I threatened.

I'd plenty of time to think about what I would say in that deposition, and as a nineteen year old, I'd foolishly felt like I was loaded for bear. Knowing about attorneys and their heartless greedy motives, I knew their theatrical threats were desperate attempts to scare me into silence. I also knew that what I'd said to them was water off a duck's back. My Grandpa had taught me, well. Obviously, the case never went to court. The defendants certainly didn't want me on the stand. For several months, I imagined myself being on the stand answering various questions, and so, I spent an appreciable amount of time inventing responses, to possible courtroom scenarios, but I never got to use them.

The dark-haired widow with the six kids ended-

up becoming an extremely wealthy woman, without even having to appear in court. In those days, there weren't limits on the awards for civil lawsuits. The widow had attended my deposition, but she and I didn't speak. However, she had gotten my home phone from the attorney, later called and thanked me for being so candid at the deposition. I told the lady that except for the death of her husband, the pleasure had been all mine, for indeed, it had been. Besides, I felt bad for rudely walking away from her that day at my stand, when she'd come looking for her husband.

Being only nineteen and completely tactless, I asked her how much she had received. It was nearly three million, which is still a lot of money even today, but a fortune back then, about the equivalent of \$21 million, today. Her deceased husband had been an international chemical engineer, an American citizen, who been born and raised in Italy. Most likely, his Italian accent is why I had trouble understanding him, when he first woke-up on the beach that day, right after the initial CPR, but before he had the metal tongue clamp dropped in his throat.

Instead of being in deep trouble with the *Beach Patrol*, I was invited to return for a third season, as a lieutenant, where I would have been directly under

the captain, number two on the beach patrol, and driving up and down the beach in a jeep, checking on all one hundred and ten guards. But, I just couldn't do it. The nightmares were too much. Never had I thought I could be so psychologically weak, but sad to say, I was. After that summer, I knew I could never be a doctor or a combat soldier, since I had full blown *PTSD*, from just being a lifeguard. That summer, I'd had over two hundred pulls, and had helped on others. After the summer was over, and I'd be sitting in college, and I'd flash on the dead man, but usually I'd just relive one of the more difficult rescues, where I was barely able to save the victim.

The *PTSD* flashbacks may sound bad, but for me, they weren't that big a deal. What was a big deal were the *PTSD* nightmares. The nightmares, contained plenty of fear, enough to make me get out of bed, drink booze, and not want to go back to sleep, unless I was very tired. With the daytime flashbacks, I'd just relive a rescue. I'd see the dead guy for a few of seconds, sweat a little, and my heart would pound, but there was no real fear. The awake *PTSD* was simply attention getting, with just a pounding heart and sweat. Sometimes, I was jarred out of my reverie by the professor, shaking my

shoulder.

“Joey, you okay?” He would ask.

“I was just thinking about something, sir.” I’d reply.

“It must have been something pretty bad. You okay?”

In a way, the daytime flashbacks weren’t that unpleasant, in that they released me from the monotony of the day-to-day. But as I said, the nightmares were rough, filled with legitimate terror, and subsequent depression. The dreams were of people drowning and sinking too deep. In the dream, I’d often be swimming down into the darkness, reaching for the victim, but they’d be sinking too fast, and so they’d always remain just beyond my grasp. I’d be breast stroking and frog kicking downward, trying to catch-up to them, but they would invariably disappear into the darkness, and of course, I’d be running out of air. Occasionally, a shark would suddenly appear, adding to the flight of the situation. I’d awaken gasping for breath, as I realized it was only a dream, I’d violently suck in air. Upon awakening, I be filled with feelings of dread, wondering just how many of such dreams I was

going to have to endure, before they'd finally stop. It took about about year for the nightmares to end, and they then left me for good.

After awakening from a nightmare, I'd get up, and sometimes walk around, drink a little whiskey, go stand in the warm shower, and drink the water to counter the morning hangover. Nobody worried about drinking tape water, in those days. Now, there's an absolute shit load of radium in the water, where I currently live, and the cancer rates are grossly elevated. The cancer rates for the state of Alabama have gone down 17 percent in the last ten years, but for Mobile County, they've doubled in the same time period. Still, the local public water company assures all its' customers that the water's perfectly safe. And nobody really cares, till you or your's get that a fatal diagnosis. Those cancer cases represent big profits for big Pharma, hospitals, and various medical corporations. What's millions of skin bags of dead protoplasm?

While I just harshly criticized the above-mentioned Ocean City doctor, I would like to say that the vast majority of medical doctors, whom I've had the privilege of knowing, are extremely good, highly intelligent, caring, and talented men and women.

Yes, a few were butt-heads, but most work hard to make our lives healthier. It's easy to criticize physicians, but just you try getting through medical school, or working as an intern. It's no easy chore, unless you got the brains and drive. Moreover, working with the public is always tough, but especially when they're sick.

Average people could never make it through medical school; it's simply too hard, but so many of them love to bitch about their doctor! I took a few med classes for my Ph.D. They were seriously demanding, and stressed my marginal intellect. Nonetheless, I've often wondered about those physicians, who graduate from the island schools, especially since one nearly killed my cousin the other day. He said my cousin was only suffering acid reflux but two days later my cousin received three stents in his heart after almost dying. My cousin was having a heart attack, which later required three stents. The island graduate completely misread the labs and EKGs.

One of the most remarkable doctors, I've had the honor of knowing, worked in a pediatric ICU, continually filled with infirm infants struggling to survive. When working on my boring post-doc

research project, trying to determine where in the brain certain B-vitamins bound, I was also recruiting doctors, MDs and PhDs to work in a developing foundation for the study of *Sudden Infant Death Syndrome* or *SIDS*. Some of the doctor's tiny patients were near-miss *SIDS*, infants who had apparently died of *SIDS*, but had been resuscitated, or in some way revived, and returned to life. Maybe the mom did CPR, or screamed so loud, that the infant's eighth cranial nerve, blasted the baby's brainstem back into life. Some infants are born into life that way, when the doctor slaps their bottom, and the pain stimulates the baby's *reticular activating system*, which stimulates the baby's *nucleus tractus solitarius*, causing the baby's heart to beat, and the muscles of its diaphragm to contract and descend, so its tiny lungs fill with air. In some cases, perhaps the fright of facing life, causes the newborn to cry with its' first exhalation.

A near-miss *SIDS* baby is more likely than a normal child to have another deadly *SIDS* attack in the near future, so they became the focus of considerable research interest. Most of the community, which surrounded the hospital, was *LDS* (*Latter Day Saints*, or Mormons), who were generally highly fertile folks. By-in-large, they make great

parents. The Mormons believe in the principals of America's founding fathers (regardless of all their shortcomings), and are mostly decent, hard working people, though in my less than humble opinion, they've bought into a religious hoax. Maybe that's why so many work for the CIA. And though they are often bright, IQ doesn't seem to have much to do with one's belief system, or need to believe in the teachings of some religion; for needless to say, most intelligent people may be every bit as fearful of death and the unknown, as anyone else. Also, early childhood programing works well on most people; again, regardless of their IQ. Fear and early teaching are powerful programming instruments... basic brainwashing 101.

The reasons why I think Mormonism, or the *LDS* religion, may be a fallacy is partly outlined in the book, entitled, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* by Fawn McKay Brodie (1945). She wrote five scholarly books. Perchance, Brodie's best was about Thomas Jefferson. Many, if not most, Mormons believe that Joseph Smith to be the founder and original prophet of the *LDS* church. If you're *LDS*, or thinking about becoming *LDS*, you may wish to give the above book a gander. Ms. Brodie

describes Smith's life as being somewhat fraudulent and that he was a "genius of improvisation." That might be a polite, non-libelous, way to say, conman.

Jan Barnett Shipps in *Sojourner in a Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons*. University of Illinois Press, 2000, p. 165, describes Brodie's work as, "...the first genuine effort to come to grips with the contradictory evidence about Smith's early life." Of course, I am sure others have tried to dispute the work, but it seems solid. Smith's twelve golden tablets, and his receiving the Urim and Thummim are just too ridiculous for me, much as are many parts of all the major religious texts. Each religion has its own lore, its' irrefutable miracles, its' spiritual or Godly events. The funny thing about that is that every follower knows their religion is the only true religion.

Rumor has it that it was the twelve apostles (leaders) of the Mormon church, who requisitioned Ms. Brodie to write the history of the founder, but then, they later excommunicated her, since they didn't agree with what she'd uncovered and published about the notorious Mr. Smith. Perhaps, she'd made an honest intellectual effort and got canned for it. Of course, maybe that's better than

getting burned at the stake for being a witch. Each religion has bad things in store for those deemed to be unbelievers. Why do you suppose they do that? Shouldn't the unbeliever be pitied.

After several visits to the good doctor's office at the ICU, to discuss the *SIDS* foundation, I'd noticed in the corner of his office was an old WWII Army cot, made of the three sets of crisscrossed wooden sticks and a rough piece of canvas, complete with a thin pillow, rumpled white sheets, and a simple gray woolen blanket. As cots went, it was your basic uncomfortable little military antique. A couple of times, I had remarked, "Looks like you slept here, last night." To which, the good doctor would simply nod, confirming my observation was correct.

After a several visits, I became well acquainted with the doctor's staff, and confided in them about how much I admired his work, so they took me into their confidence, and told me that the doctor literally lived in the hospital, sleeping every night in his office on that uncomfortable WWII cot, so he could be near his tiny critically ill young patients. If a baby was found to be in extremis, the doc was but five seconds away.

The young doctor slept, ate, and showered in the

hospital, neither renting, nor owning an apartment or house. The word was that he'd only been outside the hospital a handful of times, in the five years he'd been working there. In addition, he used his salary to purchase things for his nurses, and for the medical equipment and supplies for the ICU. He had completely devoted his life to the care of the struggling lilliputians; skillfully snatching them back from the grim reaper. Perhaps, he had an extremely acute awareness of just how short life really is... a mere flash in the pan, a very brief chance to do some good, before whatever comes next, if anything. The memory of that humanitarian doctor continues to humble me. He may be one of the lucky 144,000. That fine man made the most of his precious time on earth, to do as much good as he could, during spark of a life.

Aside from the self-satisfaction, which his work in the pediatric ICU must have given him, he was popular with a number of the more beautiful nurses. He'd gotten a couple pregnant and supposedly had performed the corresponding abortions. Shockingly, the doctor, who loved infants more than anyone I've ever know, and who constantly fought to save their lives, performed the abortions of his own potential

offspring! Later, the physician came-up with a solution to his fertility problem, canceling his ability to pass on his powerful humanitarian genes, by performing his own vasectomy. While carrying-out said minor surgery on himself, he accidentally clamped a testicular nerve with a pair of hemostats, causing a significant painful delay, where he had nearly passed-out from the mind numbing jolt of agony. Once the hemostat was unclamped and the torment subsided, he finished the procedure.

The man, who had devoted his life to the care of infants, didn't want to father his own. In a way, that made sense, in lieu of the fact that a job like his, wouldn't have allowed him the time, for being a doting dad. It's sort of how the catholic church demands that priests and nuns don't become parents. This man, unlike the Ocean City doctor, sincerely loved his patients. The ICU doc had craved-out of the expansive universe a near perfect niche, tailor-fitted to his arcane medical talents. In my view, he was something of a saint, much as was the aforementioned Spanish maid, Carmen. He was a confirmed atheist and Carmen was a devout Catholic. Contrary to what many people believe, one's belief system usually has little, if anything, to do with their

inclination to do good. Often, goodness is largely innate. Some of the most dishonest people, I've known have been the most religious. In business, it seems that the more a person claims to be a Christian, the more likely they are to rip you off.

Due to the nature of his job at the ICU, in a non-biological sense he may have actually been the ultimate father, whose sick children appeared, and recovered or died after a brief stay with him, but all in desperate need of his attentions. His life was rich, constantly filled with success and tragedy, where the relationships existed in that attenuated time frame. The good doctor was like a bullet chess player, whose life-long opponent was death. Sometimes, the doc won; other times, death.

The good doctor seemed comfortable with his life's circumstance. He never displayed the slightest sign of anxiety or frustration. It was obviously nice to be so needed, for the critical medical care he could provide. Never had I seen such dedication. How I admired him! So, while the doctor at Ocean City had been something of an uncaring nightmare, the pediatric ICU doc was like a highly skilled saint. Like any other profession, physicians exist with markedly different abilities. One of my aunt's favorite past

times is to find things wrong with every doctor she's ever visited. In her mind, she's never meant a capable doctor, and she's meant many. This is owing to the fact that it's generally easy to find fault or error in someone, but it often takes a genius to spot the genius, in another soul. Though she's likely smart, though she may not be a genius; consequently, every doctor remains flawed, and lacking.

As stated, in pursuit of my doctorate, I took a few difficult med school courses. In addition, I've worked in a hospital or two, and a few research labs, so I have known more than a few physicians. Moreover, I have spent a few thousand hours studying the published medical literature. These limited experiences form my meager ability for evaluating medical doctors. While undoubtedly all doctors make mistakes, and often lesser minds like to make the most of pointing them out, too few people focus on all the skills, dedication, and knowledge many good doctors possess. How do people judge a gifted individual, when they're not gifted? The answer to that question is simple... 'poorly'; nonetheless, few patients hesitant to render their unqualified opinions. Hence, for survival's sake, physicians must often grow thicker skin.

Besides the thick skin, it seems to me that there are five pivotal things which might make for a good doctor: 1. An impressive amount of medical knowledge. 2. Acute observation skills. 3. The ability to discern subtleties in a patient's behavior. 4. The capacity to live and think well, for long periods, in a state of near complete exhaustion. 5. The love of humanity. Perhaps a sixth thing might be the ability to think, far outside the box. Still, for the vast majority of easily diagnosed and highly treatable medical maladies, it's probably only important that the doctor possess just the first two traits.



A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR CAPTAIN AHAD

My second year at college was an academic disaster, plainly due to too much partying and gambling, with practically no studying. I honestly didn't care that much for the gambling, but it was a social thing, not an addiction. As mentioned, gambling though fun, was not my thing. *The Beatles* were telling people that all you needed was love, and Diana Ross and *The Supremes* had a big hit with, *Love Child*, and I was singing *Happy Days Are Here Again* (Milton Ager and Jack Yellen, 1929), since I was no longer in military school. There were several nearby women's colleges; hence, we were always trying to raise money for gas, food, booze, weed, and condoms. The first semester, I'd managed to catch the Hong Kong flu, and laid on a small sweat soaked mattress for four days. Much of the illness seemed like a miserable miasma of confusing fever-rich dreams and powerful hallucinations. Every now and then, a stranger would appear in my room and give

me a glass of water, sometimes a pill, which I took, trusting that it was good for me, and somehow I survived. I just laid on that grungy thin mattress and drank those glasses of water, took what various people gave me. Occasionally I'd work-up the energy to move from one sweat-soaked area of the mattress to a drier spot, or to roll on my side to pee on the floor. I don't remember defecating for several days. Afterwards, I threw-out the mattress, bought a new one, did some laundry, and moped the floor.

It was 1968, when the category A type flu pandemic struck, and killed about one or two million people worldwide. The mutated pathogen was an H3N2 influenza virus. Lord knows, it will happen again one day, and the death toll may be worse, because the United States puts far too much money into defense, and far too little into medical research. The world needs to develop research centers, which are only designed for quickly creating, manufacturing, and distributing two things: new effective vaccines, monoclonal antibodies, and antiviral drugs.

Nearly everyone in the dorm contracted the plague. Only one student died, since we were all so young. Those who didn't get sick, or recovered,

served as caretakers of those who were still sick. Those were the guys, who brought me, what were probably, aspirin, and the glasses of water. The college resembled something out of Camus's novel, *The Plague*, except unlike the book, being young students we almost all survived, a few of the older folks in the surrounding community died. Once the plague passed, most of the dorm tied-on a rowdy 'survive the flu bender,' and as a result of that bender, right on the heels of the flu, I felt pretty rotten for yet another week, and resembled a walking skeleton, so I laid off the booze for two solid weeks, and only smoked the occasional joint.

Generally, after each party weekend, the following Monday morning, I'd have a substantial hang-over, and feel would feel drained. Sometimes, all I could manage was to stand in the gang shower, drink the shower water, lean against the slick tile wall, and let the warm restorative water wash away my indulgences. I've always loved water, whether it's an ocean, river, or a shower. Even the sound of water, comforts me. I prefer salt water to fresh, except for the fact that you're sticky, when you get out.

One of my fellow dorm students, Mason Chen,

was a visiting Chinese exchange student. Mason was a bigger drinker than I, so some mornings Mason was practically incoherent. Since he was hundred percent Chinese, it was a standing joke that he had brought the Hong Kong flu to the campus. People started calling him “Hong Kong,” or sometimes they’d call him, “Flu man.” The nicknames stuck, but Mason took no offense and seemed to enjoy having the distinctive labels. In fact, he began to refer to himself, using those monikers. If someone would call him, ‘Mason,’ he’d jokingly correct them.

“I’m Hong Kong, not Mason.”

One Monday morning, Hong Kong and I were standing in the gang showers, not saying a word, but just trying to weather our hangovers. The only other guy in the bathroom that morning was a full fledged jerk, by the name of Albert, the epitome of southern right wing Christian arrogance. He didn’t drink or smoke, and went to church every Sunday. The cognitively mediocre Albert loved telling us how stupid we all were for leading debaucherous lives. But while he was indeed right about such criticism, he was nonetheless a condescending asshole, in oh so many other ways, and completely all about himself. It wasn’t hard to tell that while Albert wore his

religion on his sleeve, his belief in the God strictly served as his ticket to the afterlife, a psychological dodge for unavoidable death. Albert only loved Albert... a self-centered egomaniac, if there ever was one. Since he was forever admiring his reflection in the mirror, he may be the only person, who could actually wear-out a mirror.

His girlfriend was your prototypical submissive mouse, who spent all her time telling Albert how great he was. He came from considerable money, and she knew it. Arrogant Albert reciprocated by continually telling her how lucky she was to have him. There wasn't a kind bone to be found in his rather lengthy skeletal system. His standout trait was that he was mean, and genuinely loved to hurt weaker people; both, physically and psychologically, whenever the opportunity safely presented itself. Albert had the habit of finding something to criticize about nearly everyone, but especially when it came to females. His favorite comment was that females were only good for one thing, and that if it wasn't for that one thing, there'd be a bounty on them. His girlfriend, whose eye was firmly fixed on the dollar, had often heard him say such, but she was quick to say he was 'such a kidder.'

We all assumed he had no genuine skills with the fairer sex. He became known as 'Arrogant Albert,' which morphed into Asshole Albert, and later still into Double A. Yes, Asshole Albert was actually proud of his arrogance! Because the dorm housed only young males, most of whom were not strangers to drugs and alcohol, the place was a never ending source of ridiculous entertainment, and aside from Asshole Albert, it was a virtual Disney world of aberrant behavior.

Besides Arrogant Albert, the only other guy, who had not gotten intoxicated that weekend, was the dormitory's resident nerd, Eric. Though he wasn't a party animal, Eric was a good and kindly soul, who helped everyone with their homework. He was a legitimate mathematical genius, and was all about creating and working on the mathematical problems of Paul Erdos, many of which were considered a big deal in the world of math. Eric liked working on them, especially since some of the problems came with a reward, if solved. He'd corresponded with Erdos, and cherished the letters. Though only nineteen, he was a college senior. Eric probably now works for the *CIA*, since the agency does a fair job of trying to recruit the best and the brightest from the

world of math. Though I'm far from being a mathematician, I feel that with 'enough data,' one day, if not already, the various MANOVAs may be used to accurately predict events, far into the future! They are such powerful statistical tools, and may lend themselves to some serious world predictions. Perhaps, someone has applied them to the data generated by the stock market for the last fifty years, and thereby deduced the elusive patterns, with immensely dependable R values. And while I'm pretty certain that has been done, has anyone used the outcomes of the market predictions, and a few other types of data, to predict the events of the real world: murders, wars, discoveries, diseases, weather patterns, massive fires, shifts in ocean currents, etc.? I think Tom Cruise starred in one such movie.

Eric was the epitome of the benevolent nerd. While he was the shortest guy on the hall, he had the largest head, a virtual magnum-cephalic, if you will. His cranial vault looked large enough to hide a great horned owl. His nose was twice normal size; on the other hand, the young nerd had the skeletal frame of your average twelve year old. He wore a 1950s buzz-cut, with each hair exactly a quarter inch in length. He cut his own hair with a pair of electric barber

clippers, every Sunday. Besides a never ending supply of pimples, his face sported the classic coke bottle glasses, with the industrial strength black plastic Buddy Holly frames. Eric's fashion statement never varied: plain loose-fitting dark slacks, with cuffs, comfortable white tennis shoes, white socks, and a long-sleeved collared white shirt, complete with the classic white plastic pocket protector, so his pencils and pens never fouled his shirt. He didn't wear a tie, yet on cold days, he'd button the top button of his shirt. Eric's biggest fear was getting a cold. He was a hypochondriac, so if anyone got sick, Eric treated them as if they had the plague.

One Monday morning, Eric had been complaining about his 'grumbly' stomach. Before I went to the shower, I handed him a half full bottle of pink *Pepto-Bismol*. I could plainly hear his stomach bubbling and gurgling! But even though he wasn't feeling too good, the ever-diligent little Eric was dressed and preparing to attend his first class.

"Maybe you should skip going to class today, Eric. I can heard your stomach gurgling a mile away!" I commented, continuing down the hall toward the shower, thinking that I was going to skip my classes that day.

When the unexpected event happened, Hong Kong and I were standing in the showers, in a miserable hungover state, just trying to get our brains back on line, after all the party the previous night. Asshole Albert (AA) was in one of his more extremely obnoxious condensing moods. Knowing full well that Hong Kong and I were severely hungover, he was feeling the sadistic need to loudly preach about the evils of our drinking alcohol. Each of his loud words was like being stabbed in the eardrum by an icepick, partially because the tile walls seemed to amplify his irritating high pitched nasally voice. AA was dressed only in his white boxers, and stood in front of one of the bathroom sinks, fondly gazing in the mirror, while shaving.

“You two hungover lazy fools, look worse than three day road kill, in the blazing hot summer. You look worse than my uncle George Ricks, when they found his corpse behind the barn... and by the way, he'd been dead for a week from cirrhosis of the liver. Ha, Ha, Ha! When are you two going to realize that all that drinking and partying is only going to do ya in?” Asshole Albert loudly proclaimed.

“Shut the fuck-up, Albert. Or I swear to your Christian God, I will seriously hurt you, when I

recover from this fucking hangover. No one likes you. You're nothing but a worthless arrogant sack of shit!" Hong Kong had a firm mastery of all American curse words, and his response indicated he wasn't in a receptive mood. As I'd soon discover, Hong Kong was not one to be messed with, for there was a markedly dangerous streak in that atypical Chinaman. Hong Kong was not built like your average Chinese, but more like an Asian pit bull: small ears which sort of flared slightly outward at their tops, small evil eyes, a shaved cranium, huge lower jaw, big teeth, wide shoulders, thick chest, large hands and feet, excessive amounts of natural muscle, short tempered, bow legs, etc.

But at that moment, suffering the effects of a momentous hangover, neither Mason nor I was offering up any serious fight. In fact, that morning's post-flu hangover was actually making me momentarily consider Arrogant Albert's overbearing advice: no more drinking, regular studying, stop lying, perhaps actually try to make something of myself, etc.

The extraordinary occurrence began, when suddenly little Eric and his grumbly stomach, came hurriedly short-stepping into the bathroom, heading

directly for one of the white porcelain thrones, located about six feet directly behind Arrogant Albert. AA paid little Eric no mind, but just continued to shave his recessed chin, while admiring his face in the mirror. It was pretty clear that poor little Eric was suffering with some kind of severe gastrointestinal distress.

In the men's dorm, the commodes didn't have any privacy doors, only short four foot by four foot metal dividers. Looking panicky, Eric hurriedly undid his trousers, and as he bent forward, to lower his pants and underpants, right before he was about to swivel the necessary 180 degrees, to place his bare buttock on the commode seat, his pencils and pens unexpectedly fell out his plastic pocket protector, and clattered onto the white tile bathroom floor. He should have just left them there.

When the pens and pencils hit the floor, Eric reflectively bent further down to retrieve them, which applied significant pressure to his distressed lower colon, causing a gigantic thick jet of medium brown diarrhea, to loudly blast-out, from his rear. The virtual fountain of fast moving heavy brown liquid excrement created a whooshing sound, as it shot forth, immediately followed by a loud fart. The

amazingly brown liquid spout easily traversed the space between him and Arrogant Albert, and was voluminous enough that it completely coated Arrogant Albert's left shoulder, back, the left side of his underwear covered butt, and most of the back of his left leg, but best of all... the thick brown poop had completely covered the back of AA's head! I found it nothing short of astounding that so much high pressurized thick fluid could be housed inside the small thin Eric. *God, it looks like a couple gallons of chocolate pudding!* Eric must have failed to defecate for a week. The massive jet was something you'd have expected from a hippopotamus.

Just after the brown geyser gushed-forth and had virtually covered the entire posterior surface of Asshole Albert, several things transpired. For a couple of seconds, AA was paralyzed with the realization he was covered in Eric's highly smelly diarrhea. During those seconds, and even with our hangovers, Hong Kong and I launched into a long paroxysm of continuous uncontrollable laughter, which went on for most of the rest of the morning. Our ribs ached for days, after. Eric offered a feeble apology to Arrogant Albert, who abruptly became extremely irate. The only reason Arrogant Albert

didn't physically attack Eric, is that he knew that Hong Kong and I would have hurt him. Angry Arrogant Albert then came running toward Hong Kong and I, to rinse the excrement off in the gang shower. Posthaste, Hong Kong and I vacated the showers, not wishing to get any of Eric's reeking brown feces on us. The smell was unbearable, especially with our suffering with sickening hangovers. Hong Kong then decided to pick on AA.

"Man do you smell bad, Asshole Albert! Ha, ha, ha... Eric, you picked the world's best target to shit on. Nice shot, man! You're going to be famous, Eric! You're the man, who shit on Arrogant Albert." Hong Kong yelled, while laughing.

Later, we all congratulated Eric on his supreme accomplishment. After that event, we all began to refer to Eric as, 'The Sniper,' and 'Dead-eye.' Around campus, he quickly gained fame as the man, who'd shit on Arrogant Albert, and so overnight The Sniper, became famous, and the toast of the campus. Because of that one accident, Eric was asked to join several fraternities, and we all worked hard to get him dates. He was given free drinks and was set-up on several dates. Hong Kong had a sister, Heng, who was also a math major at *Mary Washington College*. Chinaman

introduced Heng to Eric, and oddly enough, it was like they were meant for each other. Heng was a small frail young woman, also with an extra large cranial vault, like Eric. They hit it off, from the moment they meant. Later than spring, The Sniper and Heng married, just a few months after he had hosed down Arrogant Albert. Life can be filled with unforeseen providence. In fact, it may all be one giant shit-storm of coincidences, but we humans with our meager three pounds of gray mush, jiggling about in our cranial vaults, are only smart enough to occasionally decipher one or two of them, ergo we often think of coincidences as being unusual.

The Sniper said this cognitive limitation was reflected in the way the human mind had created various forms of math. After all, all forms of math, or for that matter everything made by humans, are created by the human brain, and are designed in accordance with what the human brain can conceive of. As mentioned, for predicting the future nothing beats Biblical amounts of data, fed into multilinear regression or a multivariate analysis of variance. In a way, these procedures may one day uncover the entire world of coincidence. With enough data and computational power, the entire future may be laid

to bare, so that there would be no more mystery, no more freewill, as if there really were any such thing! Nevertheless, we'll probably still feel like we're in control. The ego just won't be denied.

Our college dorm was a four story brick monstrosity, forming a squared off U shape, with two rights angles and three wings, not too dissimilar from the dorm, I'd lived in, at the dismal military school; except, my college dorm room was twice as large, had a door without glass panes, and no one inspected it for compulsive neatness. Nonetheless, I kept it at the same level of neatness as the one in military school, not too dirty and not too neat, just livable. In one of the interior corners of the dorm-building, below ground level, was housed the college's primitive computer center. To get to it, one had to descend a flight of stone steps, down from the parking lot, into the concrete basement. Back then, computers were very large and heavy clunky machines, operated by things called, 'punch cards.' Punching out those 7 3/8 inch by 3 1/4 inch hard paper cards was tedious and ever so time-consuming. After producing an ungodly giant stack of them, the computer would 'read' the stack, but could still only compute the simplest of tasks. The cards represented

lots of work, with very little practical benefit. The computers had the cognitive prowess of a drunk two year old. In a primitive practical way, the punchcards were the computer's software. This was the dawn of the computer age, long before PCs came along. Today's cheapest little smart phone is light years beyond those expensive electromechanical beasts.

They were loud mechanical clunkers, which, though complex, were ridiculously simple, compared to today's computers. When it was turned-on it sounded like a dozen washing machines. I'm waiting for the miniaturized biocompatible computer, which can be implanted inside the human skull, with an electrical-neuro interface. If we could only imagine the possibilities that such living machines might convey, a super-human brain. What would it be like to have a brain that makes Einstein's seem like the brain of an ashkenazic rabbit? Maybe it's just a matter of adding stem cells in the hippocampus and frontal lobes to make more memories and increase the brain's computational power. Already, artificial limbs can be moved by controlling our brain waves. If enough brain waves are recorded, relative to a huge set of cognitive tasks, theoretically a computer could read the brain waves (even without

electrodes), and so the protoplasmic brain and the electromagnetic might become as one. The transmitter could be carried by the person and the computer could communicate via satellite bounce. If enough data were collected from enough people, such a device could be for everyone. What would it be like, if everyone had an IQ measured in near infinite digits?

In the few weeks before Christmas break, Hong Kong, Arrogant Albert, The Sniper, and I had spent many long hours punching-out the computer punchcards, that could cause the computer to print-out our Christmas cards, to be sent to our families. The repetitive task took hundreds of hours of insanely tedious work. Those primitive monotonous paper cards would enable the dinosaur-sized computer to printout the simplest Christmas card, on the old-styled off-white super wide computer printer paper with the tracking holes running down both sides; placed there so the tracking wheels could push the perforated paper through the ultraslow moving, whining, black ink printer. In those days, a Christmas card printed by a computer was considered to be quite a novelty, and computers carried a mystique; thus, to receive a Christmas card printed by a

computer was considered to be an exciting break with tradition.

If you weren't born before 1950, you probably can't appreciate the excitement generated by such a thing. Humans are usually impressed with their latest advancement in technology, only to think it ridiculously simple, a few years later, and thus it goes, *ad infinitum*; whereas true art, whatever that is, somehow remains timeless. Oddly enough, it probably will be some of the more primitive technologies and good old fashioned greed, which render the earth uninhabitable, i.e., coal fired power-plants, auto and truck exhaust, asphalt, mining, drilling, wars and the military industrial corporations, concrete, mechanized deforestation, atomic weapons, increased fires, etc. Its illegal for an individual to throw a chewing gum wrapper on the ground, but it's okay for large gluttonous corporations to snuff-out the entire human race, not to mention countless other species. It's their right, because you sheepishly do nothing. Go figure?

Professor Ernest J. Bettcher was in charge of that primitive computer in the basement of our dormitory. The guy was a miserable excuse for a teacher. He was tall, big boned, long limbed, had a

big belly, was extremely hairy, and almost constantly ill-tempered. Professor Bettcher complained that women were ‘uncooperative, illogical little creatures.’ We students took this to mean that his wife probably didn’t enjoy his company, for it was clear that the man lacked a certain amount of sensitivity, not to mention, hygiene. Still back then, being a sexist was much more acceptable. It was the accepted that men belittle the gentler sex. Where my Dad never participated in such, many guys did, then; the reasons for such varied, but none of them are worth iterating.

Because of the way the professor dictatorially ruled over the computer center, we dubbed him ‘Captain Ahab,’ taken straight out of *Moby Dick* (one of my all time favorites), which almost every high school student had been required to read. The only shortcoming the book displayed was a lack of hot sex, and I’m not joking about that, so now you know my literary judgement is highly flawed. Captain Ahab loved nothing more than to degrade students, and openly criticize their work. Next to the aforementioned Penguin (my Spanish teacher when I was eleven years old, and living in Spain), the professor was the very worse kind of teacher.

The Penguin and Captain Ahab were polar opposites in physical morphology, but weirdly enough, very much alike in personality. Captain Ahab actually boasted of having the highest student failure rate... a dark depressing distinction, for which he took great pride. The school should have paid us to take his course, and to deal with his ever conceited nature. Even Arrogant Albert found the professor's arrogance unbearable.

"He's a lot like you, Arrogant Albert! That's probably why you don't care for him." I postulated.

"Fuck you, Joey! Now you think you're some psychiatrist!" Albert succinctly responded.

Even though Albert and I spoke to each other in a cruel sarcastic fashion, on some strange level we still got along. In one particular computer class, Ahab asked a female student to answer a question. When she didn't know the correct answer, smiling Ahab then said that it really didn't matter, because she was a female, and females were only good for certain things, and that, 'obviously excluded higher education.' Back then, no one did anything to Ahab, since as mentioned, such callous behavior was the accepted norm. Emotionally damaging the young female student was not frowned upon. I'm sure Ahab

didn't remotely appreciate the harm he'd so rudely inflicted. If by chance he did, he didn't care; perhaps he enjoyed it, since an icy current of sadism flowed through his blood.

As mentioned, my three friends and I had spent, what seemed like, countless hours over the last several weeks, meticulously and monotonously punching-out hundreds of paper punch cards. In order for the Christmas card task to function properly, each card had to be precise. We had just finished the entire miserable protracted task, and were happily primed to load our stack of manilla colored paper punchcards into the ancient clunky computer, to printout the sublime holiday cards, which we'd then stuff into envelopes, and mail-out to our family members. Some of Hong Kong's Christmas cards were going to be sent to his family members in Taiwan. He'd written, telling them to be expecting the unique computer-created Christmas cards.

But when Captain Ahab realized that our punch cards were at last finished and ready to be run, he gleefully informed us that the loud mechanical dinosaur had to be used for more pressing issues, and that we wouldn't be allowed to make our holiday cards, which meant all our hours of tedious work,

preparing the miserable punchcards, had been for nothing. The truth was that there weren't any pressing issues, but Captain Ahab had a recalcitrant little itch that needed scratching. Needless to say, the four of us students, who'd work so long and hard, were furious.

Captain Ahab was one of those people, who had a larger than normal knot of neurons, designed to generate that satisfying feeling known as, 'cruelty.' Said hateful neurons, probably directly connected-up with his *Septal Nucleus* (the center of sexual arousal and sexual pleasure), so he could be carnally triggered, by just being mean and hateful! Maybe, that's why some men get turned-on by belittling, or even beating, their wives or girlfriends... the masochistic women's dreamboats. The erection demands such insanity to function.

"Well, you boys better go buy some cheap Christmas cards at the old five and dime. (The 'five and dime' was a phrase used, in the 1940s through the 1960s, to describe any independently owned, small dry-goods store, sort of like a very small *Walmart*. The name indicated that many of the items sold cost only five or ten cents!) The computer is going to be too busy, all the way into Christmas

break, guys. Now, don't bother me any more, about using my computer, until after you come back from the holidays!" Captain Ahab happily depressed us.

Ahab's sadistic comment meant that we had collectively wasted hundreds of hours. A major wrestling match began between two regions of my meager gray matter: that portion of the motor cortex, which controlled the skeletal muscles created to allow me to pivot and deliver a very hard looping right hook to Ahab's face, and the logical portion of my left prefrontal area, manifesting the idea of not getting myself thrown out of school and into jail. For a few brief moments, I vacillated between which of those two areas I'd let continue to operate. Luckily, for my future, the left prefrontal region won-out.

During my momentary cerebral struggle, Hong Kong surprised me, by cutting loose with a lengthy string of loud Mandarin expletives, no doubt containing the equivalent of several overworked English four lettered words. While Captain Ahab, hadn't a clue what Hong Kong had said, he seemed to understand, and to add insult to injury, the disagreeable professor produced a booming demeaning laugh. *Ahab's happy that Hong Kong is pissed!* Most likely, to avoid being arrested, Hong

Kong turned and quickly left the room. Ahab's abusive chuckle restarted my central wrestling match. This time my right hand managed to close, but once again, the prefrontal tangle of neurons triumphed, and so again, I avoided expulsion, and jail. Since our dorm was three floors up in the same building as the computer-center, we were in and out the computer center all day, and we easily monitored the use of the machine. As a result, we knew full well that Ahab had lied to us about its overuse. In actuality, there were long periods of disuse, where we could have easily created our Christmas cards. But, Ahab took fiendish pleasure in seeing the disappointment, he'd generated in our expressions. Enduring such malevolence whittles away at your own goodness.

The muscles of facial expression can often speak louder than words, yet at times, they're consciously given little credit.

Roy M. Willer

Moreover, it was obvious that he knew we fully

realized his sadistic deceit, but he didn't care. He had smiled the entire time he was lying to us. Ahab continued to broadly grin, as we stormed out the computer center, and climbed back up the stairs to the asphalt parking lot, which formed the courtyard of our dormitory. Those stairs were the only way into and out of the computer center.

Now days, such cruel behavior doesn't get to me as much, since over the years, I've run into many such buttheads, and have better learned to ignore them, dismiss their efforts, and to thereby dampen their sadist pleasure. For me, it seems that these folks have mostly been medical administrators. In my youthful days, I allowed such folks to anger me, causing me to consider revenge. The revenge, which the four of us students perpetrated upon Captain Ahab very nearly killed him.

Later that evening, after the Christmas card disappointment, the four of us sulked, played poker, drank bourbon, and smoked cigars, in Hong Kong's room. We tended to often use Hong Kong's room, since it was one of the larger corner dorm rooms. Needless-to-say, the evil Captain Ahab was our topic of conversation. By far, the most disappointed and vexed among us was Hong Kong. Until Ahab had

done this, I had never realized that Hong Kong was capable of such intense hatred. Sure, he'd often been pissed at Arrogant Albert, yet that was nothing in comparison to how he felt about Captain Ahab. Until that day, I had wrongly assumed that Chinese people were relatively passive folks, but it was Hong Kong, who wanted to walk to the nearby gas station, purchase a couple of gallons of gasoline, and torch the computer center.

We were quick to point-out to Hong-Kong that it could result in our entire dormitory going-up in flames, killing some of its residents. Hong Kong taught me never to underestimate an angry Chinese. The true genesis of Hong Kong's rage was that he'd planned on sending some of his computer-generated Christmas cards overseas to his relatives, and already had written them, telling them to be expecting the unique cards. As a result of Ahab's refusal to allow us to print them, Hong Kong had 'lost face' with his family, plainly a highly devastating loss for Hong Kong.

Likewise Arrogant Albert was incandescently hot about the evil Captain Ahab, and proposed that since the computer center was below ground level, we could break-in that night, disconnect the emurgergy

pumps, plug-up the drains with rags, and turn on all the facets in the bathroom, clog the one toilet with a shirt or two, bend the float arm to jimmy the toilet to constantly run, and thereby flood the place, destroying Ahab's costly computer. Then before sunup, one of us could loudly pretend to discover the 'accident,' swim in, in an apparent effort to rescue the computer center, removing the plugs in the drains, and turning-off the facets, and fixing the toilet. Said person, if seen, might therefore be considered a hero, rather than a villain, but regardless, by then the computer would be thoroughly ruined. If said person was unseen, then the mystery of the flooded computer center would remain an unsolved.

I was shocked at how quickly the normally insufferable, Christian conservative, Arrogant Albert, had become a plotting terrorist. We almost went with Arrogant Albert's beautiful little flood plan, for once Ahab's precious clunky metal computer was submerged and ruined, the miserable professor would be out of a job. The machine was too expensive to replace. That seemed like an ingenious plan, to me. I liked it, and recall thinking that it was the first time Arrogant Albert had actually impressed

me. With Ahab's lie, AA had gone from being my adversary, to my ally. The enemy of my enemy is my...

Eric, the mathematics nerd (the sniper), quickly pointed-out that this idea was a first degree felony and during the subsequent investigation, Captain Ahab would be sure to point us out as prime suspects, and the investigation would likely be rigorous. In addition, Eric mentioned that we might be seen breaking-in the computer center, since there were many dorm windows, from which we could be observed. Eric pushed hard for common sense. Although Eric made sense, we'd have been better off going with that flooding plan, he had talked us out of, rather than the injurious plan we were about to engage.

"You guys are way over the top on this. You don't want to end-up in jail, because of cantankerous Captain Ahab not letting us make our Christmas cards. He'd really love hearing about us being locked-up. Just go buy some cheap Christmas cards and mail 'em out. If you want revenge, do something simple, like letting the air out of his car tires, or hitting him with some water balloons, when he's not looking, but so he doesn't know who did it. You give

this jerk far too much credit! He's definitely not worth any of us going to jail." The brilliant sniper pleaded.

It was a modification of sniper's water balloon suggestion, that we went with. As it turned-out, that plan nearly killed Ahab.

"He's not human, he's like the devil. I say we flood the blessed place! It's a great idea!" Arrogant Albert countered, not quite ready to go with the water ballon idea.

Hitting Ahab with water balloons was what we ended-up doing, but with a few hazardous changes: the size of the water balloons, the number of them, and the altitude from which we deployed them. All three of those variables turned-out to be acutely dangerous. These things were not intentionally planned to be dangerous, but unquestionably they were. We were just too drunk to sufficiently think them through. Smashed on bourbon, the four of us put together our scheme, for later that evening. At the time, the strategy seemed harmless enough, but we ended-up severely injuring and almost killing, the evil Captain Ahab, and in the process, we frightened the crap out of ourselves. We didn't have any water balloons, and back in those days, after six o'clock, all

the stores were closed. There was no convenience stores, or 24-hour *Walmart*. Instead of balloons, we used the plastic bags that our shirts had come back from the laundry in. These bags were about sixteen inches long and nine or ten inches wide. I'm not exactly sure how much water each bag held, but it looked to be roughly half a gallon. Each of us ended-up carrying four bags, roughly two gallons apiece, eight gallons total for the four of us.

That evening just before nine o'clock, the four of us were drunk and up on the roof of our dormitory, water bags in hand. We'd had exited on to the roof, from a pitched section of attic, which had a window, opening directly onto the flat roof. We stood wobbling on the edge of the roof, drunk on our ass. Luckily for us, there was a small three foot masonry railing to barely keep us from falling off. Nevertheless, it was still something of a miracle, that none of us fell over the little railing. Two of us stood on each side of the interior corner, directly above the steps leading down to the computer center in the building's basement. The four of us carried a total of sixteen water-filled bags, each bag was knotted closed. The knots served as handles by which to hold the bags, two bags in each hand. If each bag held

four pints and ‘a pint is a pound the world around,’ ergo the four of us collectively hold about 64 pounds of water. Being highly inebriated, none of us considered the physics, the force which 64 pounds of water could deliver from four floors up. Besides we figured the odds of actually hitting him were slim.

The approximate fifty foot drop allowed the 64 pounds of water-bags to build-up considerable speed, and remember that in the world of physics force equals mass times acceleration. The fifty foot drop allowed for considerable acceleration. We never considered the amount of force these water bags would ultimately bring on impact. They probably were traveling about seventy miles per hour, when they nailed him. In our drunken minds, they were just big harmless bags of water, and the worst they could do would be to soak Ahab’s clothing. Besides, we figured that we’d be lucky, if even one bag actually hit him.

The computer center closed promptly at nine o’clock in the evening. Wearing his character dark green Herringbone sport-jacket, plain light blue shirt, and black slacks, that’s exactly when the large fiendish Captain Ahab would invariably emerge from the center, lock its door, then turn to ascend the

steps up to the asphalt courtyard. Briefcase in hand, he'd walk to his car, and drive away. We stood in the dark, far above, peering down from the dorm's rooftop, silent, drunk, wobbling, and posed, with water-filled bags in hand and ready to soak the cruel man.

When Ahab's shoe touched the top step of the parking lot level, our prearranged signal, we all lifted and threw our water-bags in perfectly timed unison. We had arbitrarily agreed to lead him by twelve feet. Miraculously, our timing appeared flawless... all sixteen bags launched at exactly the same instant. *What amazing timing for four drunks!* The sixteen bags moved through the air, as if Captain Ahab's head was a giant water-bag magnet. The silent falling bags seemed to be drawn to the man.

As the clear water-filled plastic bags soundlessly descended the fifty foot drop, they passed the various lighted windows of the dorm rooms, ergo the clear liquid-filled sacks seemed to periodically glow and shimmer with an eerie luminescence. This lighting effect made them appear alive, like something out of a science fiction movie. The glowing shimmering bags made me think that the deed was somehow divinely inspired. *Could this be the hand of God,*

accurately guiding our sixteen bags?

In an odd way, the lobular-looking incandescent bags looked like sixteen small glimmering alien UFOs. Hypnotically, they began to vector and merge together, forming one giant luminous blob, and so simultaneously they all slammed hard, directly into the back of Captain Ahab's cranium, neck, and shoulders. Not a single bag had strayed off target. *What are the odds?* As mentioned, it was as if the bags were directed by God's will, which they may have been. All sixty-four pounds of fast moving water hit the overbearing disagreeable professor, in perfect unison. *Thank you, Lord!* As the bags hit, the religious Asshole Albert actually said, "Praise the Lord!"

The water-filled bags hit with such an overpowering force that Captain Ahab was instantly slammed forward, smashing forehead-first, into the unforgiving asphalt of the empty parking-lot. His heels had literally flown-up, behind his back, as he went down. *That looked weird!* The heavy, fast moving water bags represented the first monstrous blow to the back of his head, and the hard asphalt parking lot was the second savage blow to Ahab's forehead. The event was a double whammy, to both the back and front of his skull. Surprisingly, the

actual impact only made a muted slap-like sound, followed by the small splashing sound of the released water, so the muffled violence caused none of the students to run outside or even look-out their dorm windows. Not a soul had noticed.

Shockingly, Captain Ahab laid sprawled-out, unmoving, and unconscious, facedown on the then wet black asphalt. Only his right foot jerked for a couple seconds, but then it stopped. *Is he dead?!* Sometimes after you shoot an animal, a leg will jerk. We didn't know whether he was dead or alive, but he certainly looked dead. *Christ, we killed the bastard!*

Fear raced through our four young minds. I, for one, was absolutely terrified. The water from the sixteen bags had collected in a sight depression under the lower half of the professor's body. Straightaway, the four of us were no longer drunk, not even slightly. Right then, we were all fully somber, and freaked-out on pure adrenaline. *Oh please, get-up Captain Ahab! I don't want to go to prison.* We were all consumed by the fear, that we had killed the professor. *I know he's married!* It had all happened so quickly, but not so innocently. The 64 pounds of water, from 50 feet up, represented a monstrous blow. Fate had dramatically shifted from playing a

little college prank to a clear case of premeditated first degree murder. After all, we'd planned it. *I'm not going to drink, again... you can't in prison!*

The old law about an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I looked around at the windows on the courtyard, and still, no one was looking. Apparently, our deed had gone unnoticed. As stated, the exploding water bags hadn't made much noise, and fortunately Ahab hadn't cried-out. Hong Kong was the first to react. Without a sound, we swiftly filed off the dorm's roof, back through the attic window, then rapidly and fluidly, down the four flights of stairs. Once we were standing over Ahab's unmoving body, I knelt down, and with considerable trepidation, gently pressed two fingers to his neck, praying for a pulse. Few things ever felt so good, as the strong rhythmic tapping of his carotid artery on my fingers. *Even his neck is super hairy.*

"He's alive!" I happily whispered to my three comrades in arms!

Everyone smiled at once. But, Hong Kong was already picking-up the ruptured plastic bags, the evidence of our attack, with fingerprints, and he was also furnishing us with practical guidance on how to proceed. The Chinaman was quick witted and fearless, taking over the role of leader.

“We throw away these 16 plastic bags, in the 55 gallon trash barrel, way over by the football field, and everyone will think that Captain Ahab slipped on this water puddle. Eric you take these bags and go get that bottle of ever-clear in my room, then go burn these bags in the barrel. Don’t let anyone see you. We tell everyone we saw Ahab slip on this puddle. If anyone asks, who saw it, all four of us say we did. We had just come walking into the parking lot, from across campus. (He was pointing at the small puddle created by the broken water bags.) Captain Ahab won’t know what happened... no way he could possibly know. He didn’t get a chance to see the water-bags. He’ll just think he slipped on water puddle. Joey, you go call an ambulance, now, and don’t leave your name! Get going Eric, and come right back. Albert, watch the windows to see, who looks out and just back our story about him slipping in the puddle. No one says anything. I do the

talking.” The Chinaman strategically instructed us, and we obeyed. *Hong Kong is great under pressure!*

Hong Kong was all about covert organizing. *His idea could actually work!* There had been a rainstorm the day prior, and the sixteen bags of water, along with the slight depression in the asphalt, had made a rather authentic looking puddle. It was a viable plan. In a panic, I sprinted to the pay-phone in the dorm hallway, and called the operator.

That was how emergency calls were made, before 911 came along. You just dialed, “0.” I informed the operator that a man had slipped in a water puddle in the quadrangle of the men’s dormitory at the college, struck his head on the asphalt, was unconscious, and was in need of an ambulance. She said, “My goodness!” Of course, I just said, “please hurry!” Then, I hung-up before she could ask me questions, like my name.

When I returned to the scene, about a dozen curious students had emerged from the dormitory and were gazing down at, and milling around, the still unconscious Captain Ahab. Everyone was talking about how Professor Bettcher had slipped in the water puddle and bumped his head. I couldn’t believe my eyes... Hong Kong was actually smiling.

How can he be so cool under this kind of pressure... smiling like that? Hong Kong seemed to be completely impervious to the seriousness of the situation. He's enjoying the fact that we'd really knocked the shit out of Ahab. After all, it had been Hong Kong, who wanted to burn the computer center. He'd certainly got more than he could have hoped for, with the sixteen water bags.

Hong Kong had obviously started the false rumor about Ahab slipping in the puddle, and Arrogant Albert just nodded his head in agreement with Hong Kong. Fortunately, everyone believed the Asian's contrived story. Eric had returned from disposing of the plastic bags. We all said, we'd seen it happen. Correspondingly, Hong Kong ran an excellent bluff in poker, something which my Dad greatly admired. *He's not scared, because he knows the worst he can get is deportation.* Being careful to support his neck, several students gently rolled the professor over onto his back. Rolling Ahab over revealed a pronounced swelling on the crown of his forehead. The appalling dark reddish blue protuberance was literally the size of a golfball. The huge blood-filled lump scared me. At first, I thought it was a piece of his brain protruding through his frontal bone. In reality, it was

simply a large hematoma, or a big wad of blood, which had collected below the skin. Ahab was breathing okay, but he was still unconscious!

Ahab is truly an asshole, but even so, I hope he doesn't have brain damage. What are the odds that all those sixteen bags would come together like that and hit him as one? It really must have been God's doing! After all, Ahab was a world class prick, and God works in mysterious ways, and those sixteen bags were thrown by four drunks, yet they all flew true. This is a case of divine providence.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way is a Christian hymn, written by William Cowper in the 1700s. In reality, that statement about God working in mysterious ways, though often uttered, is in fact, nowhere to be found in the Bible. Someone just made that up; none the less, millions believe it to be in the Holy Text. The phrase has often been used to explain the unexplainable. When some Bible scholar can't explain why God did or didn't do something, the scholar just utters that convenient little phrase, and that solves the apparent dilemma. There are many important issues which are not remotely explained in the Bible, i.e., there's not a word about the subtleties of things like: the Krebs Cycle, evolution, DNA, black holes, the content and function of the solar system, the nature of the atom, relativity, gravity, neurophysiology, etc. Why didn't God include such important things in the Bible? Answer... He works in

mysterious ways. On the other hand, maybe the those guys, who wrote the texts, were not inspired by the great creator! I realize that there are plenty of folks out there, who desperately want to believe that the Bible is divinely inspired, but I for one, don't think the Bible's creation, with all its' apparent errors, should be blamed on the creator of the universe.

After about twenty minutes, the ambulance arrived, carefully placed the still unconscious Captain Ahab on a canvas stretcher, loaded him up, and drove him away to the hospital. The four of us retired to Hong Kong's dorm room, where we'd all been playing poker. There, we opened another bottle of bourbon. The booze was medicinal since we were seriously worried Ahab might die. Even Arrogant Albert drank that night. Nobody got much sleep, except for Hong Kong, and no one went to classes the next day, except for Hong Kong. Everything was business as usual for the Chinaman. As I said, Hong Kong turned to ice under pressure. Often, I have figured had we agreed to burn the computer center, Hong Kong would have done it. He was fearless.

The next afternoon, my history professor, called the hospital to check on the despicable Ahab. He informed me that Ahab had broken his neck and fractured his skull, but fortunately there was no

apparent paralysis, nor immediate signs of brain damage, and that he was fully conscious, talking, and able to move his limbs.

“Barring something unforeseen a full recovery is expected. We’re all glad to hear the good news!” So stated the school’s history teacher.

Hong Kong shrugged at the news, since he probably wanted both: paralysis and brain damage. Though the rest of us were glad Ahab was going to be okay, none of us went to the hospital to visit him, for fear of tipping our hand; after all, Ahab knew we vehemently hated him. No doubt he knew that normally we would not have visited him.

Ahab had been gone for a few months, but after spring-break, he returned to the college, wearing a giant thick white cervical collar. He pretty much looked the same, but the biggest change was in his temperament, which had radically changed. I smiled when I saw him, for I was indeed glad that he was going to be okay. At first, my smile only elicited his usual frown, but then miraculously, Captain Ahab’s face suddenly morphed, and uncharacteristically he smiled back. It was not his former menacing sarcastic smile, but seemingly a genuine smile of goodwill.

Has this asshole changed?

With the thick cervical collar pushing up on his stubble-covered chin and jowls, the new-found smile was forced into something resembling a flattened-out grimace; but regardless, it was legitimately friendly. Prior to then, I'd never ever seen Captain Ahab attempt congeniality. Before the injury, he only displayed frowns, smirks, and surly grins, ergo the bona fide smile nearly floored me. Immediately, I recalled the changed marine guard on the Spanish beach. How he'd first shot his 7 mm at me, then later had saved me from the painful cactus spines, and carried me home, and to pluck them out. Conceivably, the double whammy to Captain Ahab's noggin had induced some type of mysterious positive brain damage. He was sincerely different and glad to be back at the job, and we were glad he was changed, but Hong Kong was not interested in being nice to Captain Ahab. Hong Kong was still raving-on about having lost face with his family. That first day, when Captain Ahab returned, I foolishly had to ask him a question.

“If you don't mind my asking, how did you break your neck, sir?”

“I just assumed everyone knew. I slipped in a water puddle, up there in the parking lot, Joey. It

was dark, and I guess I wasn't looking, where I was going. One minute, I'm leaving work, and the next thing I know, I wait-up in the hospital." He answered.

"I'm glad you're going to be okay, sir. I heard that you'll make a full recovery. Is that right?" I pressed on.

"That's what the docs are saying. I guess, I'm really lucky. Were you one of the people, who helped me, when I was unconscious, Joey?"

"No, I just phoned the operator to get the ambulance. I didn't see what happened, just saw the people gathered around you in the parking lot." I answered, taking an unnecessary risk. *I also helped to break your neck.*

"Thanks Joey. I appreciate the consideration. You know, I should have let you guys run-off your Christmas cards, before the holidays. I was a real jerk! I'm truly sorry about that. I owe the four of you guys for spoiling your Christmas cards like that. I was wrong, and for no damn good reason. I didn't really mean any harm, but I just liked to upset people. I was a jerk to just about every student." Ahab apologized!

“That’s okay, professor. You probably just had had a bad day.” I lied.

“Not really. I was on a power trip. Being in the hospital changed that. My lovely wife helped me throughout my entire recovery, and so I saw that I needed to change. She really stuck with me... at the hospital room... every day, and before my accident, she’d already gone to a lawyer to talk about filing for a divorce! She’d already started the paperwork. Yes, she was thinking about dumping my mean butt! Can’t say I blame her for wanting to get rid of me. I still don’t know why she helped me. *Jesus, is he being honest! He’s not the same.* She said I was a better person, when I was hurt, than when I was healthy. The docs said that the blow to my head nearly ended me, and my broken neck almost paralyzed me, almost made me a quadriplegic. Those things made me realize how precious life is. I’m trying my best to make it up to her. As you and your buddies know, I was one insensitive rotten bastard. I laid there in the hospital for two months and was hardly allowed to move. I had a big metal contraption bolted-up to my skull, so my neck would properly mend, and my wife was there... feeding me, bathing me, wiping my rear, reading to me, helping me through it all. I’d never

needed anyone like that, before. I wouldn't have made it without her." He solemnly confessed. *He really has changed!*

At that point, I was only slightly crapping in my drawers. Never would I have thought that I'd see the day when Captain Ahab would make a sincere apology to anyone, or speak of someone in a loving manner. These things were completely out of character for the formerly belligerent professor. The man had clearly changed; almost as if, he was a different person. That sharp rancorous edge had totally vanished, and I was pleasantly surprised.

"Oh, the Christmas cards didn't really matter. I just bought a ten cent box of cheesy cards at the five and dime. I'm glad you're going to make a full recovery. If there's anything I can do to help you around the computer center, just let me know, sir. You know, I live just upstairs, in this same building. Just ask one of the students to come get me."

"Thanks again for your help, Joey. I don't know why I was so mean to you guys. I've got a lot to atone for, especially to my wife. Thanks for dropping-by. Come back by later, bring your buddies, and I'll take you guys to lunch." *Amazing!*

“It’s a lot to admit something like that. Welcome back, sir. See you in a bit, for lunch.” I responded.
Welcome back, whoever you are.

Many years later, I would read about rare medical cases where people, who had sustained significant brain damage, recovered with greater abilities than they had possessed, prior to the injury. These were case studies of people, who after traumatic brain injury, emerged with more intelligence, or better recall, than they previously had!

<https://www.bidmc.org/about-bidmc/news/2018/08/mapping-beneficial-brain-injuries>

The physiological idea behind such an incongruous injury is that there was some active part or parts of their brain, which had been inhibiting or interfering with their intellect, or their ability to recall. The brain damage apparently destroyed said inhibitory or interfering portions of the gray mush, so the intellectual and recall portions of their brain could better function. Moreover, if you damage the part of the brain which is generating seizures, the

seizures may stop.

Perchance, in the case of Captain Ahab, the injury may have destroyed the part of his brain, which was inhibiting his humanity, or the blow had damaged the meaner, more aggressive, parts of his brain, so his goodness could shine through. On the other hand, perhaps the injury, coupled with his wife's loving care, had just made him rethink the value of life and his previous horrid ways. For the rest of my time at that college, Ahab remained a genuinely nice fellow. A couple times he came-up to Hong Kong's room to drink and play poker with us, so even Hong Kong, who'd seriously loathed Ahab, eventually came to enjoy his company. Of course, none of us ever told Ahab about the water-filled plastic bags. Hong Kong gave us full credit for Ahab's change of heart.

Near the end of the semester, Captain Ahab threw a party at his home, I was invited, along with Arrogant Albert, The Sniper, and Hong Kong. We all took dates. During the party, we got pretty drunk and Arrogant Albert mentioned about how Hong Kong had lost face with his family, because of not sending the computer-generated Christmas Cards, so I made a suggestion to Ahab how he could make it up to Hong

Kong. Captain Ahab, took my advice, and did something which went against the school rules. In effect, Captain Ahab risked his job to repay Hong Kong. I'd suggested a fifth, but Ahab bought Hong Kong an entire case of Jim Beam. Of course, I'd gotten the idea, from when I'd given the Spanish guard the case of scotch, after he'd rescued me from the cactus spines. The party was a success and Ahab and his wife were warm and friendly hosts. As my Dad often said, 'miracles never cease.'



THE TICKET

In August of 1970, a couple weeks after [Neil Armstrong](#) and Buzz Aldrin made their moon landing, my fine Dad retired from the US Navy. He'd spent thirty years, in the military, as well as working for a few other more covert agencies. He and Mom moved-back to her home town of Mobile, Alabama. A few months later, I also moved there, since my life

was fast going nowhere in the DC area. My Grandpa was still practicing law, but was showing signs of the dreaded Alzheimer's disease. However, he was still cognitive enough to work one or two days a week. Most likely, the law firm was just letting him putter around the building, out of respect. Such empathy would not be found in today's law firms... too much liability... too much ego. Now new young attorneys, who get into a firm, are often expected to work 777, from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week. If I was a new lawyer, I'd rather just take an ad out in the paper, and hope for some business. Wealth at the sacrifice of one's youthful years is a bad investment.

Most law firms are now hard-working asylums for the profoundly selfish; blazing intellects, who possess not a nanogram of genuine compassion, and are barely capable of occasionally doing the microscopic good deed, which then affords them, the misplaced feeling that they're decent folks. The infrequent minuscule endeavor gives them something they can mention at the firm cocktail party, just incase someone accurately points-out their hubris. Almost every lawyer possesses those few token good deeds, they can drag out of their cerebral attic, to dust off and display on special occasions. Most often,

attorneys possess a vast repertoire of phony expressions, designed to emulate sympathy or concern, when they actually could care less. While being well known for despicable doings, even Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson have a few good deeds to their credit. Law firms are like miniature pentagons... egomaniacs constantly preparing battle plans, not so much for the pursuit of justice, as for the quest of money. If you don't believe me, just read a couple of John Grisham novels; though fabricated by his wonderfully creative mind, his descriptions of life in the law firms are far from purely fictional. Grisham has been a practicing lawyer and a politician. Who better to know about 'phony?' Nevertheless, there is a small percentage of lawyers, who are kind and caring folks, but they are a tiny minority. They are far and few between.

To investigate this common litigious personality phenomenon, go interview a few young adults, who're getting ready to attend law school, then interview them again, after they've graduated and have been working in a firm, for a couple years. Except for their looks, you likely won't recognize them; the psychopathological transformations can be nothing short of astounding. Where brainwashing

can change a person into a shell of their former self, law school and practicing law, can cause a kind individual to mutate into a self-deceiving pompous, prick. But again, allow me to say there are a few exceptions. One was my maternal Grandpa and another is a judge I know, and he's probably the one, who should be writing a book, not me.

That callus legal metamorphosis seems to be even more profound in female lawyers. Perhaps, the feminine brain is not typically designed to be as aggressive and arrogant as is the male's, and the lord knows that the legal profession frequently demands inordinate levels of both. So maybe, when the female brain is forced to shoulder such an alien ego-driven behavior, the woman's mind is placed in an enormously unnatural posture. After all, with few notable exceptions in the animal kingdom, the female is 'generally' more passive. Why else would the female have less muscle mass, and generally not participate in contact sports: MMA, football, boxing, etc.? It's certainly not because they're designed to be more arrogant and aggressive. Correspondingly, there are far fewer murderous female psychopaths, than there are male, as well as fewer female serial killers. You don't hear of many female rapists, either.

Certainly, not compared to males. But in the actual practice of law, which often demands aggression on a glacial scale, the normal intelligent female may often morph into a fearsome, almost unrecognizable, creature.

For a few years, while attending graduate school, to get free rent, I managed a small apartment building with twenty-one apartments, directly across the street from one of the top ten law schools. It was the same law school Theodore Bundy had then recently attended. And by sheer coincidence, my girl friend had moved into one of Ted's old apartments; but by then, Ted had been imprisoned in Florida, where he was later executed.

To make a little cash on the side, I'd research legal information in the school's law library, for various attorneys, and there I'd happily checkout the better looking law coeds. Almost daily, I witnessed the aforementioned systematic transformation of the female law students' psyches, which the truculent legal education rained-down upon the gentler angles of their canny gray mush. Too many female law students went from being kind and caring, to arrogant and aloof. Of course, I saw this occur in the males, as well, though the contrast was not as

dramatic, as it was in the gentler sex. Sure, there were a few females, designed to handle the change, and still retain their humane spirit, but law school warped the vast majority.

One of the most interesting interactions involving attorneys, I've ever seen, began late one afternoon, when I was pulling out of a popular Mobile doughnut shop onto ninth Avenue. A driver had gotten cold feet about proceeding forward, and unexpectedly decided to stop and back-up, preventing me from proceeding. As a result of that maneuver, my car was left blocked, sitting cross-wise on ninth avenue, near an intersection, so I had no choice, but to simply sit there, patiently waiting for the traffic light to change, so the vehicles could clear, and allow me to proceed. In that position, the driver's side of my vehicle was fully exposed, and I could not drive forward or backwards.

Looking to my left, I noticed a sweet-looking blue-haired little elderly lady, sitting behind the wheel of a massive black Buick. The huge V-8 was pointed directly at me and had a giant angry looking shiny chrome grill, which reminded me of a lion's mouth. While I'd saw the little old lady, still at some distance, she failed to take the slightest notice of my

car sitting crosswise, directly in front of her. Suddenly, she decided to make it through the left-hand green turn arrow, before it could turn red, completely overlooking the fact that my driver's car door was in her path. The elderly matron simply stayed focused on the light, above and just beyond me.

Inadvertently, she had bore sighted me, and with her small right foot, she'd jammed the gas pedal to the metal. Perchance my presence, was blocked by cataracts, or maybe a small capillary bed had ruptured in one of her aged retinas, or perchance she was having a senior moment. For whatever reason, her entire interest remained determinedly focused on the green turn arrow, and she was determined to get through it, before it could turn red, regardless of the fact that I was in her path. The powerful roaring V-8 converted the steel-bodied Buick, into something resembling a high speed tank, a lethal motorized battering-ram. *Holy shit!*

There was no hope for my escape. My car was hopelessly blocked in, and highly vulnerable on the driver's side. The petite elderly woman was about to inadvertently try to kill me. While still accelerating, the deadly senior citizen smashed into my driver's

door, and in those days there were no side air bags. Worse yet, I was in an ultra-flimsy excuse for a car... a 1967 *Volkswagen* beetle, with a driver door about as strong as a cookie-sheet. Fortunately, I wasn't wearing a seat belt, and had time to see her coming, and so one-second ahead of the impact, I was able to dive head-first for the floor on the passenger side; no small feat considering the confined spaces in the car.

Thank goodness, I was twenty, fast, and agile. Had I hesitated in abandoning the driver's seat, I would have been squashed like a bug. After the horrendously loud crash, my driver's door was driven halfway through the driver's seat, and the flimsy VW bug was totaled. Post impact, I was fine, albeit upside down, with my head on the passenger's floor and feet up in the passenger seat. Awkwardly unlatching and climbing out the passenger door, I ran around the front of my ruined car, to check on the matron. Luckily, she was uninjured, barring a tiny quarter inch nick on the point of her petite chin, from which one or two tiny drops of extremely bright red blood had tracked two inches through her heavy white face-powder, just below her dainty quivering chin. When I asked her if she was okay, she only repeated, "Oh, my, oh my..."

The frightened fragile senior was uncontrollably shedding tears, which also made tracks through her copiously applied white face-powder. The white powder markedly contrasted, in a clownish sort of way, with her wispy bluish hair, upon which miraculously still sat a small silky black box-like hat, with an ovoid pearl stick-pin, partially pulled loose on one side, no doubt due to her chin striking the steering wheel. The little black hat was canted off at a forty-five degrees, from its' intended position atop the blue hair. For a few seconds, the black hat and blue hair held my attention. For some reason, the lopsided small boxy hat seemed more dramatic, than did the minor cut on her chin, so I reached up and repositioned, and re-pinned with the pearl stick pin. Then, I attempted to reassure her by saying, "There you go. Everything is gonna be fine now. Just sit tight."

"Thank you, young man." She spoke.

Like two small animals, her small extremely veiny hands caressed each other in her lap, and occasionally her right hand would clutch at the pleats of her long black dress. *She looks like she's dressed for a funeral, and it was almost mine.* She needed for someone familiar to hold her hands, but I

was a stranger, so I lightly put my arm around her shoulders, and gave her a very gentle squeeze. The squeeze caused her to again say, ‘Oh my, my,’ but that time it was a bit more relaxed.

The delicate anxious senior just sat there, sobbing in her big black battering-ram with its’ huge chrome steel bumper, which was hardly damaged. Perhaps, the woman had just realized that the time for her to stop driving. The only indication her car had been in a wreck was some small amount of my car’s white door paint was stuck to her bumper.

“You’re fine ma’am just breathe and relax. Everything is okay. No one got hurt... Your car is fine and I have insurance to fix my car, so just relax.” I again gently encouraged.

“Oh, my! Oh, my!...” She repeated.

How she had managed to overlook my car, sitting directly in her path, I’ll never know, but had she been a young person, I would have assumed it was an obvious case of attempted murder. Again, I told her not to worry, that everything would be just fine, and that we all would go home for dinner soon, and have a little news to tell our friends and family. I wondered if she lived alone, and was perhaps a

lonely widow. So maybe, I'd touched a sore spot, if when she went home there was no one there. Many older women, have out lived their husbands, and for them old age is a companionless proposition. One of my old aunts was like that, and constantly yearned for someone to drop by.

No matter what I said, she only continued to cry, which made her tiny black hat bounce around, so again, I found myself repining the hat, then asked one of the people standing on the sidewalk to go in the doughnut shop and get the lady a glass of water. They came back with a real glass of water, no styrofoam cup. It was too full, so I poured a little onto the ground and helped aged lady to hold the glass for a few seconds, just to make sure, it could safely make the journey up to her lips, without spilling... *twice a baby once an adult*. As she sipped, I used my hand to wipe-away the small blood trail from her tiny chin, as if I was wiping away a drop of spilled water, while being careful not to let her see the blood on my hand.

The cop was there in less than five minutes, since regardless of the city, there's often a cop orbiting within seven blocks of any doughnut shop. It's one of Newton's laws of physics. The cop first consoled the

aged lady, but then he felt so sorry for her, that the idiot actually gave me, the victim, a ticket. Perhaps, the old lady had inadvertently lied, or maybe the southern cop had given me the ticket, because of my shoulder length hair, or it could have been the simulated leopard-skinned tank top, I was wearing! But, it wasn't until after the elderly lady's daughter had driven the matron away, that the cop turned to me, and handed me the undeserved ticket, and then he told me that I could contest it, if I wanted, but that it wouldn't do me any good! *He knows I'm innocent!*

There was a line on the back of the yellow ticket, where the policeman had written in, '*improper driving, resulting in an accident.*' Having very nearly been killed, I was completely flabbergasted at being handed an undeserved ticket! While there were witnesses at the doughnut shop, the cop had declined to speak, with any of them.

As mentioned, my car had been sitting motionless, before the elderly woman accelerated and slammed dead into my driver's door. While I have had many traffic tickets, which were indeed well deserved, that particular ticket was unmerited, and the cop realized it. Politely, I endeavored to

edify the cop, but to no avail. In fact, he became marginally hostile, ending our conversation, by placing his open palm in front of my face to silence my objections. Years later, another cop would press his flat palm to my chest to warn me, to threaten me. In my subjective opinion, there is an undetermined percentage of cops, who are actual sociopaths. Granted, there are some wonderful cops, just far too few. Just guessing, I'd say that sociopathic personalities are about five times more common in the police, than in the general population. In turn, it is their evil influence, which keeps another percentage of police from being more honest or appreciated.

“If you want to object to that ticket, I'll see you in court, son. Oh! Be sure to wear that stupid looking leopard skin tank top, and don't cut that stupid mop of hair. The judge is gonna love seeing you, just like you look right now! Ha, ha!”

“You'll see me in court, all right.” I answered.

“There's no way that that poor old gal just rammed you, hippy. You had to have pulled-out in front of her, so don't try to bullshit a bullshitter!” *He just admitted to not knowing what happened.*

“I think you know better. After all, you’ve only got to ask those people, standing in front of the doughnut shop. They saw what happened. A couple of them will be coming to court with me.” I countered.

My feeling was that the cop never asked the elderly driver to explain what had happened. With a sneering smile, he climbed back into his police cruiser, and drove off. It was thought provoking to be so plainly abused by a police officer, but it would not be my last time. One other occasion of maltreatment is mentioned herein, and still another is purposely omitted.

Back home, I phoned Mom and Dad to tell them about what had transpired. They suggested that I protest the ticket in court, but ask my locally famous attorney Grandpa to represent me. Before hanging-up Dad also told me to get a haircut. Since he was a military man, through and through, he hated my hair. Following their suggestion, a few weeks later, my Grandpa meant me outside the courtroom. Grandma had dropped him off, then drove-off to attend her garden club meeting, which was all about who could grow the prettiest camellia flower. That bush flower, which gets many elderly female

Mobilians orgasmic, came from an area extending from the Himalayas east to Japan and south to Indonesia. Usually, the plant wouldn't produce seeds in Mobile, possibly due to all the city's industrial pollution.

The courtroom that morning was like *Best Buy* on Black Friday. The seats were all filled and the excess of defendants and witnesses were standing along the walls, leaning against the dark wood paneling. Traffic court was always a giant money-maker for the city. In those days, as today, city, county, and state cops hand out traffic tickets, as fast as possible. Out of the fifty states, Alabama is in the top five for handing-out tickets, and the neighboring state of Florida is number one! Moreover, the various fines, charges, licenses, taxes, etc, which the great State of Alabama levy on its' citizens to generate revenues is long, and frequently financially debilitating. Of course, the state needs all that money to be able to build roads, etc., and for the requisite kickbacks. This often requires that there be a harmonious relationship between the politicians, and the road building companies, concrete and asphalt companies, heavy equipment companies, etc.

<http://comptroller.alabama.gov/pdfs/chartofaccts/rsrsrc.pdf>

<https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/328163-scandals-consume-alabamas-capital>

The traffic court was being temporarily held in an austere one floor 1930s red brick building. The old courthouse had been demolished to make room for what would look like a giant multi-floored concrete bunker in the sky, and now serves as Mobile's glutinous Municipal Courthouse, where hundreds are now legally processed daily. Where the Nazi government, under Adolf Hitler, saw architecture as a means of imposing fear and respect, perhaps, so does Mobile. From the outside the building looks like a prison; justice is no longer a thing deserving of a beautiful buildings. Justice is now more about power, control, and extracting money. The concrete structure functions much like a cattle auction. The main difference is that crime is so much more lucrative, than beef. The traffic defendants, which show-up in court, represent less than four percent of the tickets issued, since the vast majority of people just pay the ticket, without going to court. Obviously, these tickets also act to indirectly feed the auto insurance industry! The

neighboring state of Florida, the state with the most tickets handed-out, is almost completely run by insurance companies!

It's important to remember that this process goes-on in every city and town, in both Alabama (#5), and Florida (#1). The backseat driver in Florida is always the insurance company. Because of the high price of auto insurance, it is estimated that a large percentage of driving arrests, are because of the motorist not having auto insurance! It makes one wonder about what that does to things such as: the level of unemployment, jail and prison sentencing, ability to purchase an automobile, loss of employment, etc.

<https://www.motorists.org/press/speeding-tickets-by-state/>

Pretty much the same profiteering goes on with the criminal arrests. While many arrests are unquestionably necessary and a true public service, many are made for less than noble reasons. Albeit legal, many arrests are unreasonable. There seem to be three primary reasons for unnecessary arrests: 1.

More arrests mean more money, in a myriad of ways, for the government coffers. Consequently, cops are now programmed to make arrests at the drop of a hat, when just a few years prior, such situations would have only required that the potential offender receive a serious lecture. 2. A disproportionate number of police seem to be power hungry, and what better way to feel powerful than to enforce a legal, yet unnecessary arrests; unless of course, it's the beating or shooting of someone? The police selection process is probably extremely faulty, in this respect. 3. Evidence is mounting that there is a significant degree of racial prejudice amongst the police. Arresting an innocent black person is the perfect avenue, for enjoying a racial bias. Most of the Alabama cops, who I know, refer to black people using the 'N' word, unless a black person is within hearing distance. Now days, it's customary to make the arrest and let the attorneys fight it out, in front of a judge and jury. This places a huge burden on the taxpayers. Usually, poor people end-up with a public defender, and that means a plea bargain. Rare is the poor innocent defendant, who is willing to roll the dice and take the case all the way to an uncertain verdict in court, relying on a vastly overworked public defender. That certainly has something to do

with the fact that roughly 95 percent of America's criminal cases never make it to trial!

Today, the criminal justice system is designed to place a heavy financial burden on the accused, and that consumes so much of the defendant's time and money, that they are forced to go back into crime, to pay for things such as the: court fees, fines, probation costs, drug testing fees, mandatory counseling, etc. Consequently, the criminal justice system appears to be self-perpetuating. Compounding this problem, is the fact that a person with an arrest record, has little hope for getting a decent job; again making them more prone to turn to crime. If you were an employer, who would you hire, the guy with the record, or the guy without one?

Cops today are trained and propagandized to bring in the dollars, all the while, they're often convinced they're acting in the name of justice. The situation is sort of like how our fine brave soldiers believe they're killing people overseas for just reasons: freedom, democracy, keeping down terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, etc. It's also a bit like how big energy companies think that they're performing a public service, while they're killing-off the planet and overcharging you, the

customer, to do so. Big Pharma believes that they're improving public health, while they're blocking the development of new disease cures. Organized crime is a drop in the bucket compared to those things. One day a virus will come along that will force Americans to pray for socialized medicine. It's the only way cures will ever be developed. In all four cases (the law and prison industries, the military industries, energy companies, and the pharmaceutical industries), the driving factor is plainly money, not the pure desire to help society.

While a criminal justice system is clearly a necessity, something tells me that the one we have now is destroying far too many good people, and worsening and promoting criminals and criminal activity, rather than reforming prisoners and reducing crime, but how else are we going to keep all those newly built prisons in business? While there is a lower percentage of murder and larceny arrests, drug and traffic arrests are way up, so the total number arrests, in general, are by-in-large climbing each year. It bares repeating, that the great United States of America locks-up not only a grater percentage of its' citizens than does any other country, but more people, in general! And with a

record like that, it intuitively implies that there are many people in prison, who don't belong there. Criminal justice has become so much more than a mere cottage industry; it's more like the Biltmore House industry.

Courts generate huge profits for cities, counties, states, and federal, strongboxes. Private prisons are the new opiate of the poorer masses, while international corporations, like *Baliburton*, *GEO*, and *Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)*, as well as others are reaping massive profits. For example, *CCA* has more than sixty-seven facilities each running just under 100,000 beds, and it has reputed to have been embroiled in a number of scandals: maltreatment of inmates, lobbying efforts to hide operational details, gang influences, falsification of records, issues involving prisoners used as a profitable labor force, etc.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrections_Corporation_of_America

My bet is that for said corporations to receive various government funds, the facility/corporation

must maintain a certain percentage of occupancy! Hence, the pressing need for more arrests, and the corresponding plea deals. Prison businesses also have the sad ignominious effect of keeping down the minority vote, something which might be attractive to certain right wing groups, i.e., the republican party. Indirectly related to this situation is the fact that the birth rate of whites has fallen below that of the minorities.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/17/minorities-birth-rate-now-surpass-whites-in-us-census_n_1523230.html.

Obviously, in most prisons the majority of prisoners are minorities (latinos and blacks)... non-whites. Prisoners can't vote and felons must jump through a series of hoops to regain their voting right once free. Most of the time, the lives of former prisoners are so difficult (poverty, fines, costs, no jobs unless it's for low pay, etc.), that they never bother to try to regain their voting rights. Little is done to rehabilitate prisoners; after all, recidivism means continued prison business. The prison corporations not only receive money to care for the

prisoners, but more money for the prisoner's labor working for various large corporations, while in prison. In addition, all the arrests and prosecutions mean more money for local, state and federal courts, as well as for the police budgets. Never forget that most of the federal money, going to support prisons, comes from you, the taxpayer, who else? And again, America locks-up more people, and a higher percentage of its' citizens, than any other country.

While dressed in a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie, but without cutting my long hair, I stepped into the courtroom, along with my old Grandpa and two witnesses from the doughnut shop. Quickly, I spotted my belligerent crewcut antagonist, the cop. He was sitting on the front row of seats, with his cop buddies. His head turned and then his face locked onto my gaze, instantly broadcasting a toothy sheer of confidence. In his mind, he knew he had me. *What a jerk!* But that day, it was not just going to be his word against mine. Not only was I represented by a great attorney, my Grandpa, but unbeknownst to the cop, as stated, I had the two witnesses, who'd been sitting in the doughnut shop, and saw the sweet little old lady in her big black Buick pile-drive me, while I sat motionless, trapped

in traffic. Moreover, they had witnessed the cop refuse to honor my request, that he, the cop, interview the witnesses, who'd been watching in the doughnut shop.

With those two witnesses, I assumed that I was loaded for bear and wrongly thought that my case was going to be an absolute slam-dunk. As it turned-out, it was indeed a slam-dunk, but just not in the manner in which the cop, nor I, nor anyone else, could have possibly imagined. In fact, perhaps in the history of the law, what transpired in the courtroom that day has never happened before, nor since.

When I introduced Grandpa to my witnesses, he politely shook their hands, and smiled while nodding his head, but oddly he didn't question them about what they could attest to. *Grandpa seems weird, this morning.* As it turned-out, I never needed the assistance of those witnesses to resolve my case, nor did the cop need to speak, nor did I get a chance to speak; nonetheless, my case would soon be resolved, without the judge rendering a decision. As it was about to turn-out, I only needed an unexpected neuropathological twist of fate. Grandpa had appeared uncharacteristically silent that day, and I simply chalked it up to his well-known absent-

mindedness, and just assumed that he had things on his mind, that day. After a lengthy wait, Judge Walter LeGroin called my name, and my Grandpa and I stepped forward.

The first clue that things were going to be unusual was that the magistrate was overly focused on picking his teeth. He was diligently using a well-frayed and apparently less than effective toothpick. It appeared that the judge had something hung-up between a pair of upper right back molars. In front of the packed courtroom, the judge had his mouth wide-open and was unabashedly digging-away with the toothpick, between two of his molars, and had not the slightest bit of concern that the courtroom attendees, were witnessing his determined exploratory dental escapade. *He must have a piece of breakfast ham hung-up in there.* After a long minute, the judge loudly sucked twice on the offending molars, and then he again reiterated my name, address, and the improper charge of improper driving, resulting in an accident. Again, the magistrate loudly sucked on his teeth, trying to dislodge some morsel of hung-up nourishment. Clearly, he was frustrated by this.

“Okay, how do you plead?” The judge asked,

holding forth the frayed toothpick, as if he was waiting for me to take it from him.

The judge wasn't the sort of fellow to easily give-up, and again he attacked his molars with the toothpick. He certainly didn't care what people thought about his very public dental adventure. He was plainly intent on extracting whatever was wedged-in between his back molars. However, the bailiff, who was standing behind and a few feet to the side of the judge, started to fidget and frown. *What's going on?* In response to the judges question, my aged Grandpa then spoke-up.

“Your Honor, this auspicious young man is my fine Grandson, and I have the great honor of serving as his humble legal council, today. We plead not guilty to this absurd and slanderous charge, Your Honor.” *Those are rather fancy words, Grandpa!*

Up to that point, Grandpa appeared to have everything firmly under control. Judge LeGroin responded, by putting the toothpick back in his mouth, and with its' point now sticking out the right side of his mouth, so he spoke through the left side.

“That's fine... All cases pleading not guilty, will be set off, for another day. So, just go have a seat and

the bailiff will soon give you a court date and time, to return.” The judge proclaimed this, flicking his fingers in a dismissive fashion, implying we were to sit back down.

Then, the judge through etiquette to the winds, and stuck his index finger inside his mouth. With his mouth wide open, he used his fingernail to begin to dig at his back teeth. Whatever was stuck between the judge’s molar’s had begun to stir-up some irritation in his gray matter. *He looks angry!* After the judge’s comment, I turned to sit back down, but my smiling Grandpa didn’t feel like waiting for another day, so he happily countered the judge’s statement, not with a request, but with demand.

“No, Your Honor! We will try this case, today!” Grandpa countered, while smiling, and happily rocking from side to side. *We will try the case, today? Really, Grandpa?*

One thing which most judges automatically loathe are demands. At best, you might ‘humbly request’ that a judge ‘please consider or reconsider’ something. But, a demand is akin to a brand new Marine recruit politely demanding that his Paris Island drill sergeant kindly kiss his pimply adolescent ass. The magistrate noticeably flinched at my

Grandpa's dictate. Instantly, the judge's molars began to grind the toothpick into soggy wood fibers. Judge LeGroin was rapidly blinking and staring hard at my smiling Grandpa, as if he was looking at an irritating space alien.

Coincidentally, Judge LeGroin and my Grandpa, were in the early stages of Alzheimer's, and within the next two minutes, the Judge would be permanently retired from the bench, and my Grandpa would end his illustrious career in law. For many years after that day, I would see the judge wandering the streets of Mobile, sometimes mildly coherent, and at other times, lost and confused, yet never fearful. Free roaming Alzheimer's patients are something you no longer see. Highly functional senile seniors are now only rarely allowed to wander among the masses. Soon after that day in court, my senile Grandpa, and the dodderly confused judge would often find their way to the YMCA, just looking for someone to engage in a highly redundant conversation.

Like my Grandpa, the judge hated sitting at home. Boredom is a disease, which predominately affects the very young and the very old; the young because of their brains operate at a faster pace, yet

too often with less practical purpose, and the older folks because of their greater awareness of their remaining time, and because their minds are slower, it seems to them that time is moving faster and flying by. The wandering magistrate was such an admired figure, that practically everyone, who happened to be on the street looked out for him; this even included some of the old criminals he'd sent away, for the judge was indeed a good and just man, much as was my dear Grandpa. They were extremely fine men, who both had been dealt ignoble ends. Perchance, America should consider building small towns for the senile citizens, where people don't drive, and the homes have no stoves. Food could be prepared at a cafeteria, and everything could be within easy walking or wheelchair distance, with a few kindly supervising folks, to assist the patients/citizens. Where would the money come from, you ask? Read on in these disorganized books, and try to find the chapter about the C-DAD program, and there will be the requisite money. Furthermore, maybe our defense budget doesn't need to be twice what China and Russia together spend on their defense! Of course, the military industrial complex of US corporations may beg to differ.

When my Grandpa stated that the case would be tried that same day, the judge plainly became miffed, since he wasn't accustomed to being countermanded. After a moment of angrily staring at my Grandpa, old Judge Walter LeGroin violently jerked the bifocals from his face, and presented an impressively muscular frown. *Those are huge wrinkles!* The wrinkles on his forehead bulged-out like a twisted knot of small ropes. The judge's jerking-away of his bifocals had certainly caught the attention of the tall lanky bailiff, who then inched slightly closer toward the judge's back. *What the hell is going on, here?*

"Buddy (my Grandpa's nickname), did you not hear what I just said? The case will be put off to a later date!" The judge loudly bellowed, accompanied by a half dozen drops of flying spittle, which ached-out in our direction, but the tiny globs of saliva fell short.

One tiny droplet stood-out on the sheen of the hardwood floor. *There's got to be plenty of germs in that spit. God, he's really pissed!* But even with the judge's semi-violent reaction, Grandpa was not to be deterred. He had heard the judge's booming rejoinder, but chose to completely ignore it, once again smiling and making his simple unwavering

demand.

“No, Your Honor! The case will be tried, today!” Grandpa calmly insisted, while still broadly smiling.

This time, Grandpa had switched from his side to side movement, to his raising up and down on his toes, then he stopped for a three count, then again he began to raise up and down several more times, as if he'd suddenly decided to exercise his calf muscles. Anxiously, I waited, since I knew that his comment wasn't going to sit well with Judge LeGroin, and it didn't. *My case is not going to go well!*

Grandpa continued his beaming smile throughout, further testing the judge's fast-fading restraint. That's when I began to realize that Grandpa was not on his A-game, but I wasn't exactly sure what to do about it. The magistrate was looking none too sound himself. Once more, the bailiff began to inch-up closer to the judge. Since the rather muscular old judge had no neck, only Judge LeGroin's round balding head protruded above the black robes, and his aged head was fast turning a dark beet red. *He looks like he's going to explode!* The wrinkled skin bunched-up around the outer corners of his eyes, and three deep vertical wrinkles appeared between his bushy gray eyebrows, while he pushed out and up

both his lips in apparent disgust.

The judge's facial expression gave way, so that his eyeballs seemed to pop-out, then the vertical wrinkles gave-way to a virtual washboard of horizontal wrinkles appeared across his broad forehead. Next, his lower lip descended exposing his central incisors, so he reminded me of pit-bull with an underbite. Momentarily, I speculated that this odd situation might have been some shared piece of humor between two old compatriots, as if their behavior was a piece of overly rehearsed professional vaudevillian comedy. *Maybe Grandpa and the judge are acting-out some inside joke.* While this peculiar drama was unfolding, I inadvertently made eye contact with the tall uniformed bailiff, who was still inching his way toward the judge and had come to stand directly behind the popular Judge Walter LeGroin. The bailiff was looking hard at me, apparently waiting for me to return his look. I locked eyes with him, and he gave me a brief anxious nod, as if to say, 'Do you see the same crazy shit that I see?' In response, I nodded back to the bailiff, but didn't know how to proceed.

In addition, it was clear the bailiff was uncertain about what to do next, and I was watching him for

guidance. The entire courtroom was riveted to the strange little melodrama. Right then, a dropped pin might have seemed like a bomb blast. After my Grandpa's last rebuff of the judge's command, the magistrate hesitated for several seconds, perchance trying to control himself, but then he went ballistic, rising-up from his throne, he slammed down both his heavy palms on the top of the bench, leaned forward, and bellowed like a raging bull.

“Buddy! I’m not going to tell you again, we’ll handle this case another day! Don’t give me anymore trouble! Understannnnndaa me, you old moron? Try me again, and you’ll regret it, Buddy!” He had yelled this at the top of his lungs, all the while additional droplets spittle sprayed forth, yet a large drop of spit miraculously managed to cling to his lower lip. Right then, I didn't know what happened to the toothpick. *Where did the toothpick go? Did he inhale it?* Judge Walter LeGroin was breathing heavily. For a second, I recalled the black Spanish fighting bulls; how at times, near the end of the fight, they’d be breathing hard and appear exhausted. My smiling little Grandpa, again calmly commented.

“Your Honor, the case will be tried, today!” After that pronouncement, my smiling Grandpa, looked

even more cheerful, and again raised up on his toes, as if purposely taunting the judge.

Holy shit Grandpa's really gone haywire! Then, Grandpa sort of wobbled, with that weird happy smile never leaving his face. He might as well have told the judge to take a flying leap.

Suddenly, the elderly honorable Judge Walter LeGroin was literally climbing on his hands and knees over the top of his massive darkly stained oaken bench! Although the Judge was having some difficulty, since his huge black robe was pinned to the wooden desk-top by his own knees and body weight. Momentarily, the judge was stuck in place by his pinned black robe. In this respect, the judicial attire was briefly impeding his forward progress. The judge was obviously attempting to climb over the top of the bench, to physically attack my Grandpa. The magistrate leaned to adjust his weight, then with his right hand, he reached to lift his robe free, from under his knees, so that it wouldn't prevent him from getting his right leg over the front of the beautiful solid wood bench. *Holy shit! He's about to come over the front of the bench!* No doubt, the judge was going to beat the shit out of my little Grandpa.

“God damn it Buddy, you’ve done it now, you’ve

pushed me too far, this time. I'm gonna really give it to you good! You've been ask'n for this beaten, and I'm give'n it to you! You're not going to soon forget this beating!" The judge said this, while desperately trying to get his robe repositioned, so he could get his leg out, and over the front of the bench, where there was about a five foot drop. This made me wonder how the old judge was going to negotiate the drop, from the front of the bench to the semi shiny hardwood courtroom floor, with only his one leg freed. *He might just fall and bust his ass!* The fighting mad magistrate got one leg over the front of the bench and was about to swing over the other leg, to jump down to the floor and probably beat the crap out of Grandpa, but then fast as light, the long-armed muscular bailiff grabbed the back of the magistrate's billowing black robes and started pulling the judicial raging bull backwards. That left the judge in a rather precarious position, balanced right out at the pivotal position of going over the edge of the bench, with his one leg hanging over the from of the legal bench, while the other leg remained pointed out toward the side.

"Let go of my damn robe, Sam (the bailiff)! I need to straighten this stupid old man out! Let go of

me, Sam! Buddy needs a good ole fashion beaten! Hear me! Let go of my robe, now! God damn it, Sam! You hear, me?" The judge bellowed. *This is insane!*

Everyone in the courtroom was shocked, except for Grandpa, who still just stood there, smiling and looking cheery. The magistrate kept struggling to break free of the bailiff's hold on his robes, yet luckily for Grandpa, the bailiff valiantly hung-on. *Wonder if the bailiff can go to jail for restraining a judge?* My Grandpa just stood there continuing to smile, gazing-up, further enraging the red-eyed judge. *Next to Mom and the snake, this is the craziest thing I've ever seen.* My Grandpa's smiling presence was undeniably provoking the judge, to continue to struggle with the bailiff. The people in the courtroom watched, mouths open, in stunned amazement, for it's not too often you get to see a judge go postal. The cops on the front row had all stood up, but weren't about to restrain the judge. They just seemed to feel that it was best, if they only stood-up, as if they were paying someone respect.

We all like to think that judges are the epitome of wisdom, composure, and respectability. Cops live in fear of such honorable men; still, with old age, and changes in society, little can remain sacred. After all,

today some judges have their own TV shows. For me, said TV shows come-off as being ninety percent for the viewing entertainment, and ten percent for actual justice, and exist as something of an insult to the legal profession. Yes, I think trials should be televised, maybe all of them, but not staged for cheap entertainment, as they're currently conducted. It too easy to tell, that oft times the judges are operating off of their being briefed, before court has convened. The law is too sacred to be televised as entertainment, just as medicine is too serious to be governed by money! As long as big Pharma gets rich off illness, they will always do their best to prevent the development of medical cures! Cures can literally put them out of business.

At one time in his younger years, Judge LeGroin had been a professional boxer, taking second place in the southeastern United States amateur boxing championships. Even when going to law school, the judge continued to box. He loved the sport. Later after becoming a judge, the judge conducted free boxing classes for the local boys. The parent's had to sign a release, but no kid was seriously hurt. Sometimes, when a male defendant would be found guilty of abusing his wife or girlfriend, the judge

would put on the gloves, and straighten-out the defendant in the ring, after the close of court that day. The Judge continued handing-out such legal beatings, until he reached age fifty. In appearance and behavior the judge resembled a stronger Greer Garson. Times have certainly changed. The magistrate had a generally small speech, he'd levy on the woman-beaters.

“Sir, the choice is yours. You can do 90 days in the county lockup or you can meet me in the ring, at 6 pm this evening for three rounds of boxing, that is if you last that long. What's your choice... 90 days or three rounds? I don't tolerate men beating women! Such behavior will never be condoned in my courtroom. What do you want, jail or the ring? It's your call. Of course, there's always the outside chance that you'll win, and you'll kick my ass, but I wouldn't count on that, son. But regardless, it's your choice! What'll it be?”

The local Mason's had erected an actual boxing ring in a back room of their lodge. During most afternoons, it was used to train the male children in the art of boxing, but after six, it was sometimes used as the judge's criminal punishment arena. The three rounds with the judge would significantly vary in

intensity, depending on how heinous the magistrate felt the defendant had been... how badly the guilty party had hurt his wife or girlfriend.

If the guy had not been too mean, but maybe just slapped her once or twice, the judge might just knock him about a little, and let him leave. On-the-other-hand, had the asshole perniciously damaged the poor woman, perchance having put her in the hospital, the judge would avoid knock-out blows, until the very end of the third round, delving out a tremendous amount of damage to the body: broken ribs, traumatized kidneys, heavily bruised arms, hips, thighs, etc. The judge's heavy fists could put-on quite a creative exhibit, before finally delivering the merciful knock-out. More than once, the wife-beater had to be taken to the hospital, yet the judge never killed a man. It was just a boxing lesson, to which the culpable man had agreed to. For legal protection, the guilty person had to sign a paper agreeing to the boxing lesson, releasing the judge from liability.

Generally, various Masons were the sole spectators of the judge's boxing punishment, but because of my friendship with an intelligent and kindly dwarf, who managed Mobile's sports gambling, I was allowed to attend a handful of such

events. The dwarf and I both worked at the YMCA. During the matches, the magistrate quickly transformed from judge to heartless punisher, skillfully unleashing his sadistic nature to better serve justice. My feeling was that the judge's painful ministrations in the ring probably worked better, than all the anger management programs, restraining orders, fines, and most of the truncated jail sentences. Besides, a 90 day jail sentence was apt to expose the asshole to more criminals. The judge put one particular heinous defendant in the hospital for a fairly lengthy stay... rhinoplasty, jaw-wiring, fracture of the left clavicle (collarbone), four broken ribs, and a ruptured spleen, requiring surgery. It was the closest the judge ever came to killing a man. That defendant couldn't get up off the canvas; he was guilty of kicking-out most of his unconscious wife's teeth. No one ever questioned the legality of the judge's actions. After all, he was a judge, and in those days, a judge in Mobile, Alabama could do pretty much whatever he pleased.

“Wife beaters sometimes have a pecker problem. They have to hurt the woman to get their pecker hard!” The judge occasionally postulated.

Sam, the bailiff continued to determinedly lean

back, firmly pulling on the back of the judge's black robes; in response, the judge began to ineffectually flail backwards at the bailiff, with his formidable fist, ergo the elderly judge remained stuck atop of his bench, still with the one leg over the front of the wooden bench, and the other trapped under him and still pinning the black robe. This continued while Grandpa continued to smile at the entire situation. This was a type of standoff. Because of his long arms and the length of the stretched-out robe, the bailiff was staying just out of range of getting hit by the judge, and the judge was definitely trying to hit the bailiff and make him release his judicial robes. But as mentioned, the bailiff fortunately had an extremely long reach, and the length of the robe's black fabric protected Sam. After a few second's, the judge scooted backward and gained a slight advantage, on the bailiff and clocked him upside the head. The bailiff didn't hit back, but swiftly repositioned his grasp to another area of black robe. The judge's blows then succeeded in harmlessly bouncing off the bailiff's arms; still, the pain registered in the bailiff's expression. The bailiff then tried to talk to the judge.

“Judge, please calm down, sir! Mr. Buddy's has just gotten old and a little senile; that's all. He don't

mean nothing by what he says. Please just calm down, Your Honor!" *The judge is just as senile, as Grandpa.*

By then the judge was well beyond being reasoned with. Realizing this, the poor desperate bailiff quickly changed his tactics and desperately addressed me.

"Mr. Joseph Bone, get your crazy Grandpa the hell out of here, now! You hear me? Let's move it! Hurry the hell up young man! Hurry-up! Get him the hell outta here, now!" The bailiff shrieked at me, while restraining the Judge.

"Yes, sir!" I replied, realizing that the legal world, as I'd known it, was topsy-turvy. Both men, my Grandpa and the judge, had been important figures in my life. At first I gently grabbed Grandpa by the wrist and tugged to persuade him to leave, but Grandpa jerked his hand back, indicating that he wasn't going to go easily. Immediately, I grabbed Grandpa from behind, putting him in a bear-hug, pinning his arms to his sides, and I started lifting and awkwardly walking him toward the nearest exit. The cops looked-on, all as flummoxed as I was. My two witnesses, from the doughnut shop, got out of their chairs and began to follow me toward the exit. The

entire courtroom gazed-on in hushed silence.

“Don’t you try to leave Buddy! You’re get’n that beat’n.” The judge screamed-out.

“Come on Grandpa, we need to go.” I said, while struggling to pull my beloved Grandpa from the room.

“Let go of me!” Grandpa repeatedly yelled.

“Get him (my Grandpa) outta here, now.” The bailiff encouraged.

Then, the bailiff called for the cops to help him deal with the judge. He then shouted to the other defendants to stay put in the courtroom, and that another judge would soon be arriving.

While wrestling Grandpa toward the exit, I remembered the bogus traffic ticket, and yelled back over my shoulder to the bailiff.

“Bailiff! What about my ticket? The cop just didn’t like my looks... it was just because of my leopard-skinned tank-top and my long hair that he hated me. I’m fucking innocent, and that’s the God’s honest truth, sir.”

“I believe you. I know that cop.”

The cop, who given me the bogus ticket, tried

his best to look offended, but didn't quite pull it off. In turn, then bailiff, answered the cop's faulty expression.

"You know you hate long-hairs, Leroy! Don't make this harder on me, you idiot." The bailiff spoke-up.

"Let me go!" The judge screamed at the bailiff.

"Well, what about my ticket?" I asked.

"Don't worry about your God damn ticket, Mr. Joseph Bone. I'll make sure it gets taken care of. The charges are as good as dropped. Just get your Grandpa out of here! I've got my hands full! Move out, Bone, before the Judge gets loose and try to pound-on your Grandpa!"

The cop, who'd given me the ticket, and had just been called an idiot, was glaring at me. The belligerent cop had noticed that I had brought two witnesses, who were leaving with me, and had to have known he could win against me.

"Thank you, sir. Please don't forget me." I called back to the bailiff.

"Not much chance of forgetting all this anytime soon! Now, go on and get outta here, Mr. Joseph

Bone! Don't worry about your ticket." The struggling bailiff again ordered.

On the way out of the old courtroom, I passed close to a well known, and successful female attorney. She'd exited the courtroom, just before I had. She was smiling at me as she spoke in a hushed whisper, to prevent my Grandpa from hearing her.

"They're both better off dead! Wouldn't you say?" *Christ woman!*

She smiled, when making the cruel comment. *Maybe she's right, but who says shit like that... a female attorney does!* She meant the comment to be friendly, and I realized there might have been some truth in what she said, but the callousness of the statement, coming from the lips of an attractive intelligent woman, nipped hard at me. Needing to get Grandpa out of the building, I briefly responded.

"Jesus, sweetie! You may have just cursed yourself, with that cruel comment." I responded.

Once outside the provisional courthouse with Grandpa, I told him that one of his law partners needed to speak with him. I thanked my two witnesses. They left, and Grandpa and I calmly walked the six blocks to his firm. Grandpa seemed to

instantly forgot about his encounter with the judge. The next morning, I called the *Clerk of the Court*, and true to his word, the bailiff had made my ticket vanish from the court records. Before I could hang-up the phone, the female clerk inquired, if it was my Grandpa, who'd caused the ruckus, the day before. I responded that it depended on what you considered the cause to be.

That was the last time that both my famous Grandpa and the equally famous judge set foot in a courtroom, a sad farcical finale for two brilliant American litigators. A few months after that fiasco, Grandpa was admitted to a nursing home, and spent the next fifteen years slowly wasting away. While in some cases, an entire life may seem to pass in the twinkling of an eye, I'll bet those fifteen years, with senility in a smelly nursing home, was no twinkling.

On the other hand, perhaps with that forgetful neurological disease, Grandpa and the judge didn't care. Maybe, time became of no consequence, since in a way, the principle manner by which we measure time is with our memories... no memories... no time. In the pungent old nursing home, much of his time was spent in an overstuffed chair, tied down by a twisted white bed sheet, looped once around his

waist, and then knotted behind the chair. As time passed, I came to believe that the female attorney had indeed been correct, that day at the courthouse.

Perchance, Grandpa's fifteen year nursing home stay was a God mandated penitence for his passage, through the eternally mysterious pearly gates... a type of living purgatory, if you will. No doubt at least a few trillion giant oysters contributed to that gate's decor. Maybe it was Grandpa's karma to make-up for all the guilty criminals, he'd freed, and for all the innocents, he'd wrongly gotten thrown into the state dungeons, but who honestly knows about such things? But, if anyone makes it to heaven in my family, it will most likely have been my dear Grandpa, or maybe my fine Dad. For some reason, I feel that the likelihood of a person getting through the pearly gates is roughly the probability of winning three lotteries in a row. If so, is it even worth going to the convenience store, to buy the ticket?

Heaven, Heaven

Everybody talkin bout Heaven

Ain't goin there

Heaven, Heaven

Everybody talkin bout Heaven

Ain't goin there
Well, I'm gonna walk
I gonna talk
All over God's Heaven
Heaven

Lyrics to Alison Krauss's - *Walk Over God's
Heaven*



THE GIANT IN THE STEAM ROOM

To survive in this wearisome life, one must

occasionally seek some degree of levity, regardless if it's misery. While Grandpa's senility was nothing short of tragic, after the courtroom fiasco, there was one other dementia-related, darkly humorous event, which transpired before he was sentenced to the aforementioned fifteen years in the dismal malodorous cinderblock home. That peculiar event transpired in the steam room of the old Mobile downtown *YMCA*, and if I hadn't been there, there's a fair chance that my dear Grandpa might well have been beaten severely, if not to death.

Much as Judge LeGroin, my senile Grandpa did not like sitting at home, listening to Grandma's ceaseless prattle, about the day's local gossip, and things she'd read in *The Readers Digest*. Consequently, he'd somehow find a ride to, or just start walking to, one of his favorite old hangouts: his law firm, one of his daughter's houses, the *Elk's Club*, the courthouse, or the *YMCA*. At any of those places, he'd be patiently entertained, and looked-out for. When the hour would turn late, someone was sure to give him a ride home. A few times, the ride was provided by my Grandma, but she did so hate taking care of him. Her love for Grandpa, had ended many years prior, with the birth of her fourth daughter. Her jealousy of

his fame and prodigious brilliance, allowed her to someone enjoy his tragic end. This was obvious, since she took to making fun of his feeble mental state. The caretaker of an Alzheimers patient is to be pitied, except when they take pleasure in the patient's grim condition.

“Oh my God, having Buddy here is like having a chimpanzee loose in the house! He's a blithering stupid idiot! You know, he's always done ignorant stuff, all because of his foolish absentmindedness, but this Alzheimers is really ridiculous!” She happily complained.

Grandma wasn't totally wrong for wanting him out of the house, since Grandpa was in the habit of doing things like: leaving the stove on at night, so Grandma would awaken to the metallic smell of a red hot pot on the stove. Grandpa would lay his lit cigar on the upholstered furniture, and so my Grandparents lost a couple of nice pieces of furniture that way. Once he'd tossed a lit cigar in the laundry hamper full of cloths. Perhaps, he thought the hamper was a trash receptacle. Roughly a quarter of the house had been burned away, by the time the firemen got the flames extinguished. Three times the fire department had to come to their house. My

Grandparents had to temporarily move-in with one of their daughters, while the house repairs were made. Grandma never tired of bellyaching about the ‘hamper-fire.’ With her thick southern accent, she sounded especially cruel. Once Grandpa was in the nursing home, she never visited him; only his daughters and his grandkids came.

Sometimes, Grandpa would leave a water facet running all night, and he’d roam the house, like a mindless ghost. Occasionally, Grandma would awaken to find Grandpa standing next to her bed in the dark, looking down at her with a little smile on his face; probably the same gentle smile which had irritated Judge LeGroin. I’ve always figured, that she felt so much guilt for how she’d treated him through the years, that she wrongly assumed that he was standing over her, contemplating murder. Most likely, he’d just decided to look at her, like a mindless scarecrow looks at the wind. Who knows?

“I honestly don’t know what he was thinking, when he standing over me like that, but he gave me the heebie-jeebies! Can you imagine? I still have the willies about that. He terrifies me, do’n that creepy crazy kind’a stuff!” She’d loudly broadcast that, to any and all who’d listen. Then, she’d affect her fake

shiver. No one enjoyed listening.

One night Grandma awoke, and Grandpa wasn't in the house. She freaked-out, and after searching every nook and cranny, she went out into the front yard to find him literally stuck inside his car. Apparently, he'd gone to sit in the car late that night, to relax and smoke one of his *Tampa Nuggets*. Somehow, Grandpa's cigar had gotten on the metal dashboard, and rolled down into the defroster vent, near to where the windshield meant the dashboard. Determined to retrieve it, he'd forced his hand far down into that narrow vent, and his hand became irretrievably wedged inside the vent. The fire department had to again be called, to disassemble the car's dashboard and free Grandpa's trapped hand.

All things considered, Grandma was right to fear living in the house with him, since there was a reasonable chance that he'd burn the house down, or do some other worrisome thing. At other times, when Grandma refused to ride him somewhere, Grandpa would just start walking, and since he was so well known around Mobile, various people in the community would stop and offer him a ride. They'd just pick him up and ask him where he wanted to go, and if he didn't answer, they'd automatically take

him either to his law firm, or the *Elks Club*, or to the YMCA. Everyone knew that he didn't want to go home.

Back then, no one found a roaming senile senior to be that much of an oddity. It was just assumed that everyone in the community would periodically look-out for them, with: a ride in the car, something to eat or drink, a telephone call to check-in with their family, a brief polite meaningless conversation, etc. Even as children, we were taught that old people may get stupid, so we should just be nice, and help them when possible, or go find another non-senile adult to help. Times have certainly changed in that respect. A couple of local restaurants frequently fed Grandpa. All his life, he'd been their patron. One restaurant featured a disturbing plethora of taxidermically preserved animals, including a stuffed house cat. It was thought to be humorous, in those days. The feline had once been the pet of the owner of the restaurant.

Today, senile people are generally hidden away from the public-eye, and of course, the reason is so that they won't hurt themselves, or its because communities are no longer as safe, and friendly. Even their kids rarely want to be with them. But, who

truly loves the senile seniors is big Pharma, since such feeble seniors, represent a huge profit for those drug companies, and their costly, yet highly ineffective pharmaceuticals.

The average Alzheimer's patient spends about \$600 per month on their worthless Alzheimer's meds and there are over five million such patients in just the United States. So, do the math. That's about \$36B per year, for one useless drug, riddled with unpleasant side effects. And then, there's the fact that these meds, with their well known adverse side effects, require even more meds to treat the side effects, and of course, that represents even more profit for big Pharma.

Alzheimers... the forgotten pharmaceutical gold mine.

W.A. Morey

For years, the early Alzheimer's patient routinely craves human interaction, desires diversity of location, and so they're not content to just sit in a drab room, watching some monotonous television show, which because of their failing short-term

memory, they can't follow. For many of the male sufferers sports may still provide some interest. Watching movies and TV series may only serve to remind the Alzheimer's patient that they're mentally compromised, since they can't keep-up with the plot, and so the closer people get to the grave, the more they prefer to be around actual people, as opposed to images on the cathode-ray tube. Hard to believe? Just wait till you get old.

Most of the serious sports gambling for greater Mobile was run out of the men's locker room at the YMCA, by a quick-witted and remarkably affable forty-five year-old dwarf, Mr. Eugene Fox. Everyone called him, 'Foxy.' His head was disproportionately large and one leg was three inches shorter than the other, so his right shoe had a three inch thick piece of wood attached to its sole. But even with his shoes on he was only four foot seven; nevertheless, he was a giant in other respects. His official job at the YMCA was to oversee: the lounge and TV area, the massage room, the locker-room, the steam room, the whirlpool room, the sauna, the showers, the squash and racket-ball courts, the basketball court, the outdoor track, as well as checking-out and keeping track of all the sports equipment. Mr. Fox also

managed the janitor, who later became my friend, and a highly productive hitman, for one of the local car dealers. Like everyone, the hitman respected Foxy, yet Foxy didn't care for the janitor, but fortunately the janitor didn't seem to mind.

Running the sports betting was Foxy's unofficial job, and it paid far better than his official YMCA managerial position. Foxy set the odds with the advice of the sheriff and certain of the high ranking Masons. He'd dutifully phone both the sheriff, and a certain key person at the Mobile Masonic Lodge, to obtain the necessary information, before affixing the odds, or before accepting a bet in excess of five hundred dollars, as well as before taking a 'specialty bet.' A specialty bet was a bet on any sporting event, which most people didn't bet on, like a fishing, tennis match, or swimming event. Mr. Fox hated dealing with the specialty bets, unless they were for huge sums. Independently, Foxy handled the collections and the recording of bets, as well as the pay-outs, then he'd temporally hold the profits form the aforementioned bets. Everyone had to sign to bet, and sign for their pay-out. An older member of the Masons, who had once taught math at a local college, was largely responsible for final calculation of the

odds. For years, my Grandpa would then collect said profits from Mr. Fox and deposit them in the bank. Officially and unofficially, Foxy was a busy man. Though Irish by ancestry, he drank sensibly... never sloppy or overly aggressive.

No wagers were accepted on credit. It was strictly a cash up-front business, and so no bets were taken over the phone. However, occasionally people did come, with money in hand, to place bets for other people. Of course, in doing so, they became liable for correctly making the bet, and had to sign what Mr. Fox had written in his betting logbook. Foxy also wrote-out and signed a chit describing the amount and type of bet, to be returned to the person making the bet. Before computers came along, transactions were quicker: bank visits, grocery checkouts, buying stocks and bonds over the phone, booking trains, planes, buses, etc. Go into any bank and simply time how long each transaction takes. Before computers, if you just went to the teller, with your bankbook and your deposits in hand, you were done in less than a minute. Clerks prided themselves on their expediency. Now, even with your bankcard in hand, it still takes roughly four to eight minutes, for each customer. Computers have markedly slowed

transactions, but have better enabled the banks and the government to keep an eye on your money.

Mr. Fox refused to accept money from anyone he didn't know, and so he knew lots of people. Non-members of the *YMCA* were often granted temporary admission to the men's locker room, just to place a bet, or to collect their winnings. Betting was the largest drawing card of the *YMCA*, not so much the facilities, and there was nothing remotely Christian about the *Young Men's Christian Association*. Another purpose of the *YMCA* was to act as cover for numerous cheating husbands. While I was an employee at the *YMCA*, I frequently lied to suspicious wives, who'd phone looking for their wayward spouse. Doing so was a snap, since perjury is my middle name, and back then I had no problem with a burdensome conscience.

Unlike now, betting was not made on the Olympic Games, for to do such was considered sacrilegious. Steroids more or less ended the sacrosanct Olympics. In those days, the Olympics seemed to be free of advertisers and promoters, nearly free of steroid use, and to a much lesser degree, free of the ever metastatic cancer of political influence; nevertheless, politics have been corrupting

every aspect of humankind, since the early times, with psychopaths usually running the show. To prove a point, just consider all which the world record holder, Jesse Owens, went through in 1936 Berlin games, where both the American racists and the Nazis tried to prevent his stellar world record performance.

While at the Olympic Games, I had the opportunity to meet the King of England. I had the opportunity to wave at Hitler, and I had the opportunity to talk with the King of Sweden, and some of the greatest men in Europe. Some people say Hitler snubbed me. But I tell you, Hitler didn't snub me—it was our president (United States, Roosevelt) who snubbed me. The president didn't even send me a telegram. I am not knocking the President. Remember, I am not a politician. But remember that the President did not send me a message of congratulations because people said he was too busy.

Jesse Owens

Mr. Fox, who handled each and every bet, never placed a bet himself. His personal position on gambling was that it was addicting, and too much of a 'crap shoot.' In addition to his YMCA salary, two percent of the betting profits went to Mr. Fox for his service fee, while sixty-five percent went to the Masons, and thirty-three percent went to whomever was Mobile's sheriff, at the time. In addition to the two percent, Foxy was often received generous tips from the winning gamblers. No one ever questioned

how the sheriff used his profits, and the sheriff kept no books, ergo no reports were made to the *IRS*, so no taxes were ever paid. Nothing pisses-off the government quite like not getting to stick their greedy fingers to someone else's pie. As was the case in southern Spain, during my childhood, gambling was considered to be a social thing, and Mr. Fox was a master at dealing with the egos of the winners, as well as the despair of losers. Both could be dangerous, yet nothing like a bad loser, unless it's an insufferable arrogant winner.

Since that betting system had been created by, and was ultimately controlled by, the Masons, it afforded them considerable influence over the local sheriff. Usually, if a Mason was arrested for anything short of murder, the worst that would happen was that he'd spend the night sleeping in a cell, and a cop would ride him to his car or to his home, the next morning. If something serious did end-up in court, the Masonic criminal would receive special consideration from the presiding judge, since almost all the judges were Masons. Back then, there was a tremendous overlap between the Masons and the *KKK*. In fact, most *KKK* were Masons.

The Klan may have been an outgrowth of certain

Masons. There seems to have been an effort on the part of Scottish Rite Freemasonry to undermine America, and sabotage its relations with Mexico, and further carry on the slave trade. America 'occupied' Mexico in the Mexican War (1846-48), something that many, including Lincoln, (then a congressman) saw as criminal. As the Mexican War drew to a close, a General John Quitman was appointed military governor over Mexico City. The US was ready to seize all of northern Mexico, from California to Texas. Quitman, who was a Scottish Rite Mason, proposed to President Polk (a Mason) that all of Mexico be annexed and turned into slave plantations. As a result, he was coronated a 33° Mason (Sovereign Grand Inspector General) of the Scottish rite. To make an already long story short, the ultimate goal of Quitman and the Scottish rite was to 'liberate' Mexico and Cuba. A group called 'The Knights of the Golden Circle' was set up to organize this new slave empire centered in Cuba. The 'Golden Circle' actually referred to a geographical circle/region radiating out from Havana, Cuba and extending into Mexico, Florida, and most of the southern United States.

These 'Knights' trained just shy of 100,000 men, and were organized into lodges called, 'Castles.' In

the South, led by Quitman, these Knights formed the heart of the military machine of the secessionists. Quitman died in July 1858, and Albert Pike was brought into the Supreme Council to replace him. And so, Pike became the Scottish rite's Grand Commander. It might be safe to say, that if Pike supported slavery, he'd be in favor of the *KKK*.

After the South lost the civil war, it was only natural that this concept of the Knights of the Golden Circle would evolve into something designed to fight the Reconstructionists. Tennessee blacks were given the vote in 1867. In response, a couple of months later, Pike and group of Confederate generals met in Nashville to form the Ku Klux Klan; the name taken from the Greek KYKΛΟΣ (KUKLOS), meaning 'Circle,' e.g. the golden circle.

Of course, the term "Klan" loudly resonated for the many members of the southeast US, since they were of Scot-Irish ancestry. Coincidentally, occult operations in ceremonial magic are done inside a Circle. The Tennessee leaders of the Klan were frequently Masons, under the leadership of 'Supreme Grand Commander' and 'Grand Dragon of the Realm.' Perhaps, Pike wrote a 'hymn' used by the Klan, 'Death's Brigade.' Here are the final stanzas:

Fly! Fly! Ye dastard bandits who are bleeding all the land, the Dread Brigade is marching with viewless sword and brand; nor think that from its' vengeance you in deepest caves may hide, for through the darkest caverns The Dread Brigade will ride.

The misty gray is hanging on the tresses of the East And more shall tell the story Of the revel and the feast. The ghostly troop shall vanish Like the light in constant cloud But where they rode shall gather The coffin and the shroud.

Too many people love to hate, even more than they love to love. It's all a matter of genetically-induced or behaviorally-induced neural wiring. All good and evil is created by circuitry. Most days, Foxy would have thousands of dollars stashed inside his old-fashioned, tall-thin, but flimsy, men's gray metal locker, with only a simple padlock securing it. No one ever tried to break in it. All it would have taken was one swift blow from a hammer, or a quick snip with a pair of bolt-cutters, to gain access to the money, but no thief was so imprudent; since some of the money was the sheriff's and most was the

mysterious Mason's, who were largely *KKK* members, the "Good Ole Boys," who ran the entire port city. From what little I recall, the Masons came in many varieties, from saints to sadists, with the *KKK* portion being less saintly. Oddly, there were few who fell between those extremes. The Masons tended to be one or the other.

Foxy never used the locker for himself. He refused to shower at the Y. He once told me that he was embarrassed because of his crooked back, and short leg.

"My old back is curved like a snake... it's pretty ugly, Joey." He spoke candidly to me, about his scoliosis.

"Don't worry about that. No one cares if your back is crooked, Mr. Fox. Just be thankful you don't possess a mean personality." I countered.

You may fake importance, but not so easily intelligence.

On This Page by Dr. W. Andrew Morsley

My Grandpa was a thirty-third degree Mason. He

had to go to Washington DC for the semi-secret indoctrination ceremony. In his younger days, he'd drop by the *YMCA* and collect the Mason's share of the betting profits from Foxy, and with his pistol in his pocket, he'd walk downtown to deposit the cash in the Masonic bank account. He'd do that about once a week. He also filed a copy of Foxy's handwritten betting record in a safety deposit box. The copy was made by using sheets of black carbon paper, since there were no Xerox machines, in those days.

Said bank, was only a brief ten minute walk from the *YMCA*, ergo Grandpa considered the tasking to be part of his exercise program. The bank is now a county office building (tax accessor), and its beautiful massive antique vault door is still there, a giant ornate round steel work of art. It's about eight feet in diameter, and two feet thick. Its' stainless steel surface is covered in elaborate etchings and scrollwork, which contrasts nicely with other of its parts made of polished brass. If money ever goes completely digital, what will become of bank vaults? Vaults will be pieces of software, protected by pen-testers. Hypothetically, a kid in his bedroom could open and run a bank via his home computer. Hackers

will be the modern robber barons.

Just remember what the banks did to send the country cascading into the last devastating depression; they simply foreclosed on as many people as possible, then closed their doors with everyone's money still inside. It was as if the banks said, "Fuck you, we're keeping your money and there's nothing you can do about it; so just go starve and freeze!" Indeed, the depression directly and indirectly killed millions.

If the smaller banks of today and the various brokerage houses, knew a depression was inevitable, do you think they'd want to make sure you got your money, or do you think they'd just close their doors and forget about you? Could you remotely imagine Ameriprise, Charles Schwab, Wells Fargo, Scott Trade, Bank of America, Regions, etc., keeping their doors open, or simply sending you your money, if they new financial collapse was imminent. What would you do, if they just declared bankruptcy, because of a trumped-up depression? The old Jewish commander used to tell me... 'never trust the banks.' The FDIC doesn't have nearly enough money to ensure the money in our banks, and so in a serious manner the FDIC is a joke.

I sincerely believe that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies, and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale.

Thomas Jefferson

In those days, when paper money was backed by precious metals, such an ornate vault was actually useful and necessary, plus because it was a work of art, it brought in the customers. The bank robbers of the future will almost certainly be mouse-wielding youngsters, rather than gun toting desperados.

Grandpa did not share this sports gambling information, with his wife, daughters, nor grandkids. He was a multifaceted man, sort of like a politician, but one who operated from behind the curtain, while manipulating puppets. Reagan increased the deficit from \$70 billion to roughly \$170 billion. Bush took it to about \$300 billion. Clinton got it back to almost zero. Bush Junior took it from zero to approximately \$1.2 trillion. Obama got got it back down to about \$600 billion. If Trump gets in, the sky might be the limit!

Grandpa never discussed the Mason's control of

the city's sports gambling with me, but since I was good friends with the brilliant dwarf, and frequently went to lunch with him, I got the lowdown. The kindly canny little man, knew I was perpetually hungry and routinely gave me a significant portion of his food. He was the one, who told me that most of the Masons were *KKK* members, even telling me which *Y* members were 'bonafide cross burners.' The klan members wrongly assumed that Foxy was pro klan, when in fact, he was the polar opposite. Foxy hated the *KKK*, after all, Foxy was a minority in several ways... a man of profound integrity, a supremely generous man, a man of superior intellect; oh, and yes, he was short of stature.

"Joey, the *Y*'s director once told me he'd make me a child-sized *KKK* uniform, if I'd wear it. Can you believe that shit?" Foxy sneered.

"Fuck that, asshole, Foxy." I concurred.

That director later committed suicide, after it came out that he was stealing from the *YMCA*. Grandpa despised the *KKK*, yet of political necessity, he was friendly with them. Later, I'd find out from various retired attorneys, that about half the lawyers, a third of the judges, and about eighty percent of the cops were klansmen. Quite likely, the fact that so

many were in the legal profession with Grandpa, had partially contributed to his nervous breakdown. Grandpa's role in the Masons was never made clear to me. Secrets are so seductive, and empowering, but more importantly, they can often be unavoidably necessary, as well as destructive. How you manage them, and why you choose to keep them a secret, is often more important than the secret.

Perhaps, the one group of people, who held no secrets were Australia's Aborigines, the original inhabitants of the Australian continent. Some archeologists say that they migrated out of Africa more than 70,000 years ago. Once in Australia, and long before they were absorbed into the white culture, they would live in small nomadic clusters, where each group would 'walk-about' over several thousand miles of Australian desert, just trekking-along one behind the other, in single file. Sound boring? Out on the desert, there was virtually no way for one person of the group to hide anything from another, whence there was no actual need to be dishonest, and no way to keep a significant secret, unless it was your own thoughts.

archive/2011/09/aborigines-the-first-out-of-africa-the-first-in-asia-and-australia/245392/

Everyone in the group would see virtually everything the other members of the tribe did. Perchance that's why, the Aborigines considered themselves to be the 'true humans' of earth. If you give it some thought, it kinda makes sense, but it also seems rather depressingly tedious... no secrets, no unknowns concerning other people, just lots of walking, with the occasional meal and group interaction. Most young brains can adapt to almost anything, but that would be a tough one for me. The uncomplicated lives of the Aborigines are the polar opposites of the US intelligence services, with all their ultra surveillance: satellites, agents, drones, taps, cameras, computer, microwave tapping, laser tapping, and of course secrets.

From my observations, the majority of the YMCA gamblers seemed to fall into four groups: well-off businessmen, police, lawyers, and judges. The police and the judges seemed to be the most practical of the gamblers. Perchance, the judges were that way, because they tended to be cautious people, and the cops gambled conservatively, because they were

poorer and knew the judges would know if they'd bet too much. The cops feared the judges. The lawyers and businessmen were the more reckless of the gamblers. Manifestly, people would occasionally lose bets, yet I never saw a corresponding loss of temper. Foxy instinctively knew how to deal with the gamblers... winners and losers.

The dwarf was a social drinker, yet never behaved drunk. He often kept a pint of bourbon in his locker, and occasionally after work, we'd go up on the roof of the Y, for a drink, while we'd look out at Mobile Bay, talk about all the insanity of the day, and there was always plenty of crazy things to discuss. Occasionally, we'd augment the bourbon with a joint. From up there, we could see most of the city, and bay. We'd sit-up there, leaning back in two small wooden folding chairs with canvas seats, talk, and watch the sun slowly set. Sometimes, Foxy would educate me about what was happening in the local politics. The dwarf liked to make small investments in real-estate, and kept track of all the city's building projects, the various builders, and what new home or building design had been created by which person. He loved to visit building sites and monitor the progress. When a builder or engineer

came to the Y, he'd frequently engage them in lengthy detailed conversation.

Whenever I saw him, he was dressed impeccably... neat and clean. All his clothes were custom tailored. He was perpetually polite, properly spoken, and only slightly too formal; but then again, he was twenty-five years my senior, and I was of the vastly casual hippy generation. His personal life remained shrouded in a bit of mystery, and wasn't open for discussion, unless it was something to do with his childhood. Foxy never expressed an interest in joining the Masons, nor did he join the *Elk's Lodge*. He pretty much kept to himself, but apparently not always. All the members of the *YMCA* just assumed that when it came to women, Foxy led a lonely existence, merely because he was a dwarf with a crooked back, and a shorter crippled leg. Correspondingly, no one had ever seen him in the company of a female.

One evening that assumption unexpectedly changed for me. It was just after midnight, when I was on a six mile run, clipping along smoothly, with my heart, my breathing, and my stride, each following their own interrelated rhythm. For me, running is a means by which to deal with the

pressures of life. Due to the humid southern night and the speed of my pace, I was sweating, as if I was in a torrential downpour, I was doing my usual six miles in thirty six minutes, through the darkened antebellum residential streets of the oldest parts of Mobile.

Some blocks in Mobile are adorned with various multilevel antebellum mansions of the wealthy, and when running I'd suddenly be passing through areas of small dilapidated shotgun homes, but when high on running, such distinctions are of no consequence, but only serve as something of a visual distraction. I always did my best to shut-off the internal dialogue when running, becoming nothing more than legs, heart pounding, breathing, sweat, and visual input. Nearing the end of the six mile run, I briefly cut through one of the poorer areas to avoid an uphill trek, when up ahead, I saw two people in a close loving embrace, barely illuminated by a small yellow porch light. At first, I thought it was a medium height lean black man, hugging a short rather stocky white female, but as I neared, I realized it was the reverse, a very short stocky white man, with a tall willowy black girl. Quickly, I stepped behind the wide trunk of an ancient gnarly live oak, then

covertly peeked around the edge for a covert glance. First, I recognized the beautiful black girl as one of Grandpa's clients, who'd been arrested more than once for solicitation. After the embrace ended, and I saw the small man limping away, down the wooden stairs of the apartment, I realized it was Foxy, dressed in a dark suit, but without his usual tie. Indeed, he looked remarkably happy. At the bottom of the stairs, he turned and politely nodded his goodbye. She then came down the stairs, leaned forward, and gave him a long slow lingering kiss. *Lucky, Foxy...* The kiss provided me with the perfect distraction to stealthily run away, reversing my direction back down on the street. I then turned at the first available corner, so I couldn't be seen. Of course, I never told Foxy, that I'd seen him, since dating a black woman was a huge taboo, and Foxy did so enjoy his privacy. I figured he was actually dating her, after witnessing the kiss. The embrace and kiss didn't seem like a business arrangement. At the *YMCA*, the arcane little dwarf never discussed women, but was content to let the other guys think that he'd never received any female companionship, and indeed, judging from a few of the cruel comments, I'd overheard, that seemed to be what the members chose to believe.

“Yeah, he’s a nice guy, but what woman would want a twisted-up sawed-off runt, with a gimp leg?” One member had cruelly commented. *What a shit-head!*

While my Grandpa’s gray matter had been severely compromised by the dreaded Alzheimer’s, his body appeared to be in pretty good shape, especially for a man of his advanced age. This was due to the fact, that all his life, he’d been involved in sports, and had regularly exercised at the *YMCA*. He was accustomed to working-out, so that even when he’d become senile, he still carried-on, with small amounts of light exercise; at least until Grandma put him in the nursing home. In old age, he mainly went to the *Y* to socialize, and to use the steam room, where he ritually performed the lightest of calisthenics, and deep breathing exercises. I too enjoyed the *Y*, and still do, in my advanced age. Now too old for competitive sports, I still like to religiously exercise.

A couple of months after the aforementioned traffic ticket, where my Mother’s Father had had the odd courtroom confrontation with Judge LeGroin, I ran into my Grandpa, at the *YMCA*. Disturbingly, he didn’t recognize me. The encounter occurred, after

having played several grueling games of racket-ball, and I'd gone to the steam room to relax, sweat, and chug cold water, from the water-hose in the steam room. The Y's steam room was a small, six by ten foot chamber; its walls were covered in white ceramic tile. There were two poorly made, wooden picnic benches, placed at right angles to each other, against two adjoining walls.

When I entered the steam room, not a soul was inside, so I just spread-out my white towel on the wet wooden bench, parked my naked butt on it, leaned back against the toasty warm white tiled wall, closed my eyes, and slowly and rhythmically breathed-in and out the calming warm vapors, vying for something of a transcendental high. Generally, I'd stay in the steam-room for about fifteen minutes, getting-up every few minutes to slurp, from the constantly running cold water hose, in the far corner of the room.

After a few minutes of warm tranquility, I was just on the verge of catching a bonafide nap, when the steam room door opened, and in stepped a monstrously large and definitely fearsome looking man. The long haired giant came striding into the sultry fog-filled room. There was no mistaking the

non-native colossus. The enormous man was one of the famous stars of that spurious sport, known as TV wrestling. His grappling nickname was, '*The Pirate*.' He real name was Francisco González, and claimed to be a direct descendant of Pizarro, the Spanish conquistador. He was a powerfully built, extra-large, and extra hairy, Peruvian, who was well known for his surly, if not downright ruthless, disposition, and not just in the ring. The giant had been spotted by a wrestling promoter on vacation in Puerto Maldonado, during a vacation. The promoter brought *The Pirate* to Mobile, and paid him the grand sum of five dollars for every match. The Peruvian will not be remembered for his wrestling skills, as much as for his participation in a fight at the 'Green Light Bar.'

Unfamiliar with American customs, the colossus, had made the mistake of only wearing his wrestling briefs to the local redneck hangout. The Peruvian didn't understand the propensity of drunk rednecks to make fun of whatever was outside their accepted norm. The bar-room regulars decided to harass *The Pirate*, demeaning his profession as fake, which it largely was, while implying that it was a bit gay for a man to want to be 'hugging-up-on (wrestling)' other men. The rednecks likely felt comfortable in

inflicting the insults, since they vastly outnumbered the one large man. They also said something about his speed resembling like a pair of women's panties, and though *The Pirate* spoke little English, he'd gotten the gist of their jests. Two shots of cheap liquor was all it took, for the insults to spark *The Pirate's* primal enjoyment of fighting.

In short order, nine of the bar's redneck patrons became patients at the nearby *Mobile Infirmary*. Perchance, the most disturbing aspect of the fight was that *The Pirate* bit-off about half of a man's thumb, chewed it to a pulp, bones and all, while still fighting, then he spit the remaining mess out into another man's half full mug of beer. The Pirate received no jail time, since he'd done nothing to instigate the fight. Nevertheless, after the rumor of that historic fight spread, few members of the *YMCA* wanted to engage *The Pirate* in polite conversation. His proclivity for swift decisive violence could have been related to his habitual steroid use. The drugs were provided by the generous promoter.

The Pirate, who stood well over six feet five and tipped the scales at about two hundred and ninety pounds, was constructed of the finest muscle, steroids, genetics, and the *Y's* weight room, could

produce. Where many overly muscled guys move in a lumbering awkward fashion, the Peruvian moved in a quick yet coordinated cat-like manner. He was a dark olive skinned monster, with long thick jet black hair, which he was always dramatically flicking and swinging up and out of his face. Moreover, he was covered in prodigious amounts of coarse black body hair, but his stand-out characteristic was his enormous proboscis.

That giant nose was so immense, that the first time I saw it, I'd wondered if it wasn't a halloween Cyrano de Bergerac prosthetic. People were forever doing a double-take at his mammoth snout. His nose made Jimmy Durante's look like a button. As *The Pirate* entered the steam room, I told him hello, and in turn, I received a glance, a frown, and a low grunt, and for *The Pirate*, that was to be considered cordial.

The massive titan lumbered on by, and sat down in the middle of the other perpendicular bench, and since it lacked a central support, the bench noticeably sagged. The man just propped his elbows on his knees and leaned forward, with his chin resting in his palms, his fingertips caressing his temples, and his impressive sniffer jutting straight out toward the center of the room. He sat there

breathing-in the warm relaxing stream. The nose reminded me of the tubular attachment for a vacuum-cleaner. Amazingly the nose appeared to be straight, and to have never been broken, and considering he was a wrestler, that was probably something of a miracle.

Shortly after *The Pirate* had gotten comfortable and his eyes had closed, the steam room door again opened, and in stepped my naked senile little Grandpa. The cartoon character, *Mr. Magoo* immediately came to mind. Much like the animated character, Grandpa was an extremely kindly, befuddled, but highly active, aged senile man. As mentioned, even though my Grandpa was senescent, he was in excellent physical shape, owing to his genes and his little daily workouts.

Walking into the center of the steam room, Grandpa seemed to be in his own world, and was unaware of the massive wrestler and me. All three of us were quietly enjoying the warm relaxing steam. But unlike *The Pirate* and I, Grandpa chose not to sit-down. Instead, he stood and began to perform his customary series of light calisthenics. At first, Grandpa's movements were simple rotations of his arms, held straight out from his sides, and parallel to

the ground, the rotations were set in time with his forced exaggerated breathing. He'd often say it was just something 'to keep the blood flowing.' All the while, Grandpa stood in front of the massive squatting *Pirate*, but with his back to the ill-tempered behemoth, who in turn ignored Grandpa, and only sat there, eyes closed, breathing in the warm relaxing stream through his markedly elongated snout.

Suddenly, Grandpa changed his workout routine from doing rotating arm movements, to attempting to do straight legged toe-touches. His hands almost made it to the knees of his short straight legs. But as my elderly Grandpa bent down, he suddenly lost his balance, and began a stumble backwards. Rather than just allowing himself to fall, he sort of hopped and launched himself backwards, slightly bouncing upward, all in a futile effort to regain his footing. *The Pirate* didn't see any of this because his eyes were closed. As a result, *The Pirate's* immense schnozzle was suddenly buried to the hilt, deep into my Grandpa's ancient wrinkly white butt crack, and in those days, my doddering Grandpa didn't bathe too much. The confused *Pirate*, was instantly repulsed, and violently yanked his nose back from between Grandpa's sweaty ass creeks, and was in the process

of making an ugly face, when suddenly the *Pirate's* nose received, yet a second unwelcome assault. Although Grandpa was quite old, senile, and lacking good balance, he was yet capable of an extremely fast, though slightly clumsy, reaction.

My doddery old Grandpa had wrongly assumed that the giant's huge nose, was actually someone's hand, which had inappropriately "goosed" his butt. So, with lightning speed, Grandpa had found his balance, spun on his heels, and smacked the massive mammoth dead in his gargantuan nose, while yelling at the top of his lungs a single word, over, and over.

"Pervert! Pervert! Pervert!..."

That repetitious accusative word was yet the third unwelcome insult to be rapidly delivered to the undeserving giant, and since the word is almost identical in Spanish, it's meaning wasn't lost on the big man, nor on all the *Y* members outside the steam-room, who could hear Grandpa. Thankfully, everyone recognized Grandpa's voice, and they also knew he was 'not-right-in-the-head.' On the other hand, the bewildered monstrous wrestler, did not know about Grandpa's senility, and judging from his changing facial expression, it was clear that his infamous steroid-enhanced temper was ramping-up.

Suddenly, the ginormous fiend rose-up from the bench, while holding his injured snot-locker, and uttering some booming, fairly grave colorful Spanish oaths. The dangerous *Pirate*, had just been forced to sustain three grievous insults, in rapid secession: Grandpa's smelly sweaty timeworn butt being thrust upon his prodigious snout, the ensuing punch to his world-class Hoover handle, and lastly, the loud verbal effrontery. Consequently, there was a better than even chance *The Pirate* was about to lay waste to my old Grandpa, so I had no choice but to act.

Much as I'd done in the courtroom, I once again found myself bear-hugging my Grandpa, only this time, he was repellently sweaty, nude, and stinky, but so was I. To be hugging your aged naked Grandpa like that was revolting! Still, I had to shield him from the possible impending blows, and get him out of the steam room. Hugging him, lifting, and and pushing him towards the door, I was fighting to keep my balance on the slippery floor tiles. At the same time, I was begging *The Pirate* to calm-down, stating that my Grandpa was old and dodderly. The fact that I was speaking Spanish seemed to stall the menacing hulk, from attacking.

Since Grandpa didn't realize who I was, he

thought I too was a Spanish-speaking pervert, trying to molest him, whence Grandpa continued to struggle and repeatedly yelled the word ‘pervert,’ until just after I got him out the steam room door, where I released my kicking and punching, little Grandpa. Grandpa took the opportunity to hit me in the chin, so I stepped-back out of range. Thankfully the giant didn’t follow, but remained inside the steam room.

The Pirate must have gotten the message that Grandpa was a little loony and had elected to stay in the steamy cave, using the cold water hose to rinse his abused nose off, while muttering a few threatening Spanish phrases. I just walked into the adjacent shower room to wash off. For a few moments, Grandpa simply continued to stand outside the steam room door and mumble things about perverts attacking him. Then he forgot all about what happened. When he’d stopped his ravings, I called out from the shower room.

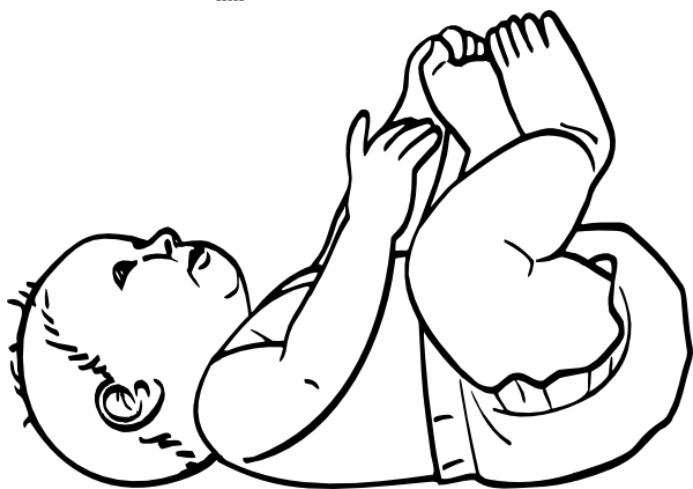
“Grandpa is that you out there? Buddy, come take a hot shower. The water sure feels good.”

After a few seconds, he ambled into the shower room and for a few seconds, stood there in the doorway, naked, wrinkly, and blinking, his bushy eyebrows rising and falling with each blink, and a

small smile on his face. *Wonder what the hell he's thinking?* Then he looked directly at me and opened his eyes wide, and after a long pause, he seemed to recognize me. The recognition was momentarily frightening. He frowned, then again a brief smile, jerked up the corners of his renowned mouth. Reaching over, I turned on the shower next to mine, adjusted the temperature, and Grandpa gratefully stepped-in, letting the warm water pound on the back of his neck and shoulders. He let out a big sigh and said, "Thanks, Joey." *He does recognize me!*

We each stood in our respective shower, with our heads bowed, enjoying the warm water. The event had forced me to realize that my once cognitively brilliant Grandpa, was no longer, but rather he was just a confused old man. Silently, we enjoyed the soothing hot water streaming over us. Apparently, even with Alzheimer's, the joy of a hot shower is possible. The realization that old age keeps taking away your happiness, hit home. Then, I recalled hearing that the horrid cognitive condition was in the genes, and so Grandpa's funny little interaction with *The Pirate* suddenly seemed a little less comical.

OBJ



THE BIG BABY IN THE BUS STATION

It was a promising late evening, both enjoying each other's company, with lingering gazes and not so careless touching. We sat together on the same side of the booth, slumped back and leaning into each other, with our feet up on the opposite seat, There were no awkward silences, but no incessant need for pointless talk, which sometimes accompanies a first date. Everything had just clicked for us. What little conversation there was, was comfortable and reflexive, as if we'd been together for years, yet with the assurance of sex, soon to come. *Thank God for women, like this!* We'd meant earlier that evening at the crowded annual *Mobile Seafood Festival*. The obvious anticipation was tickling our limbic brains, but the actual act was still a couple hours away. She was a passionate dark haired beauty, whose wavy locks hung below her ample elevated rounded rump, the type which bounced with a firmness, making me harder than advanced calculus.

She smoked tiny thin clove flavored cigars from India, claimed she didn't inhale, and drank straight whiskey from a slightly bowed glass flask, which partially matched the curvature of her nicely stretched back pocket. Some of the flask's contents

had found its way into our coffees. Indeed, she was a beautiful exotic young woman well worth the wait. Such brief delays can fire sexual intensity.

So what does one do in dreary old Mobile, if everything is closed, including the bars, but the woman just wants a little more time to tease and to evaluate you? Back then, you only had three choices, you either drove around looking at houses and buildings, while playing the car radio, or you drove out to the beach with a blanket, weather permitting, or you went to the *Greyhound* bus station, with its' small diner affectionately referred to as *The Hound*.

The driving around town or out to the beach were out, since the spark-plugs of my old *Ford* were in need of cleaning, so I didn't want to stray too far from home. The engine was running embarrassingly rough, and I didn't relish having a mechanical breakdown on the bridge, leading to the beach. Moreover, the weather was turning cold, and the heavy low cloud cover seemed threatening, ergo *The Hound* was my best remaining option, at least for another half hour. The old bus station had the usual glass ticket windows, which were then closed. There was an associated passenger waiting area filled with rows of uncomfortable cheap hard plastic shell-like

seats, which at that late hour were all empty, and there was a small luncheonette, where you could sit and drink coffee, and enjoy something simple to eat: burgers, fries, breakfast foods, pie, etc.

That small dining area was open around the clock, every minute of every day of the year, including Christmas, which then, was just a few days away. The small diner sported a ten foot tall shiny silvery all aluminum Christmas tree, with bright red ornaments, and red lights, which periodically flashed, a strangely pleasing artificial site. There's no telling how many people were spared suicide, by the bus diner always being open, especially on birthdays and all the depressing holidays. At times, the simplest distraction or smallest act of kindness can transform a quiet life of desperation, into something tolerable, making life worth living.

Lit by the harsh overhead florescent tubes, *The Hound* possessed a well-worn, but regularly stripped and waxed glaringly shiny gray linoleum floor. Whoever had laid the floor tiles, hadn't bothered to match-up the subtle wavy patterns, from one tile to the next, and so the intended pattern failed to flow. In fact, the tile patterns ran at ninety degree angles. The 50s diner was furnished with cheap hollow

chromed steel legged chairs, and tables with cracked gray plastic tops, sparkling with imbedded bits of silver glitter. There was no redundant geometrical pattern to the distribution of the glitter, so each tabletop appeared slightly unique.

The floor stripping and waxing was periodically done piecemeal, during the hours of reduced business, when some portion of the floor would be cordoned-off with a thin cotton rope. Greg, the janitor, was a big man, and a once violent first degree murderer, who'd escaped many years in prison, by agreeing to a remarkably simple surgery called the frontal lobotomy, ergo the cleaning and waxing was frequent, but wasn't always perfectly pristine, since Greg was often forgetting where he'd left things, and could only manage to discuss the simplest of things: How are you, today Greg? That's a good haircut you got, Greg. You sure keep this diner clean! Great pair of shoes you got on, Greg! Once, I asked Greg if he'd laid the tiles in the floor, but he said he wasn't sure. At times, he supplemented his income by collecting glass coke bottles from dumpsters, as I'd done as a child.

Communicating with Greg, you stuck to one-liners, then the conversation proceeded smoothly, so

I did just that, and there remained goodwill between us. We took pleasure with the sole fact that we got along. The janitor may have been dull, and a former killer; nevertheless, he expressed good will, and was far from judgmental. There's no way, I can say that about certain of the more intelligent people, I've known. Albeit remarkably simple, Greg seemed to enjoy his life. However, some of the local Mobile idiots took pleasure in frustrating Greg, making fun of his surgically reduced IQ.

“Been doing any rocket science lately, Greg? You been planning a moon mission?”

“Maybe, you can help me out with do'n my taxes, Greg? What do you say, good-buddy? Ya any good with math?”

“I'll bet lots of good look'n bitches go for a bright guy like you, Greg! Huh? Ha, ha...”

Actually, some women would enjoy Greg... more than that asshole. Except for one fight, where Greg had had enough ribbing and poured his bucket of dirty mop water over the head of the one of the rednecks, the janitor had learned to simply ignore them. It seemed, that certain of the rednecks would frequent the luncheonette, for the explicit purpose of

harassing Greg. While he was mentally slow, the men who harassed him, were both mean and average. There seemed to be no lack of such men in Mobile, forcing Greg's standard stuttering response.

"I I I been told, I's not supposed ta ta talk to people li like you, so ja ja just leave me bbbe... please." *Here, here...*

The grill and fryers ran down one wall and were cordoned-off from the dining area by a long gray plastic counter-top, imbedded with the aforementioned silver glitter. In front of the counter were ten short well padded mushroom-like gray aluminum swivel stools. The motif was pure post-war fifties. The only thing missing was the jukebox, which had to be removed in order to keep the peace. The patrons would sometimes go to war over the music sections; it was always country music versus rock-n-roll. Generally, the people favoring country, hated the rock-n-rollers, and vise-a-versa. Many of Mobile's older Southern Baptists, considered rock-n-roll to literally be the devil's music, and of course, the younger crowd loved it. Those same Southern Baptists are the kind of people, who were later positive that *HIV* was the work of the Lord. Oddly enough, such folks can sometimes be intelligent

people, but fear things they can't control directly, i.e., disease, death, themselves, other people's beliefs, music selections, politics, etc. Such people have generally spent their entire lives in the South, and because they've remained in one location, they somehow think that gives them the right to find fault, with people outside that realm.

Travel has a way of stretching the mind. The stretch comes not from travel's immediate rewards, the inevitable myriad new sights, smells and sounds, but with the experiencing firsthand how others do differently what we have believed to be the right and only way.

Ralph Crawshaw

In the late sixties, when Mick Jagger began to sing, *Sympathy for the Devil*, every Southern Baptist on the planet went ape shit and viewed that song as confirmation, that they'd always been correct about rock-n-roll being the devil's music. Hence with that song alone, *The Hound's* jukebox quickly became too contentious. The owner of the jukebox took the 45s to his favorite skeet range and used them as clay pigeons.

Please allow me to introduce myself
I'm a man of wealth and taste
I've been around for a long, long year
Stole many a man's soul and faith
And I was 'round when Jesus Christ
Had his moment of doubt and pain
Made damn sure that Pilate
Washed his hands and sealed his fate...

Opening lines of *Sympathy for the Devil*

by The songwriting partnership of Mick Jagger
and Keith Richards, known as *Jagger/Richards*

The Hound's cuisine was so lacking in aesthetics, ergo it forced each customer to focus either on the person they were with, or on some other patron, or their own thoughts, or a book, or their food. As mentioned, that evening, I was fixated on the sexy Italian beauty seated in the booth next to me. Now in my mid to late sixties, I still find myself occasionally revisiting my memories of her. That night, she was enjoying making me wait. Women do sometimes enjoy flaunting their sexual powers, much as men

enjoy their various aggressive brands of sexual display.

A few members of each sex seem to image that their sex is the superior one, but if that were the case, where would we all be, without the other? The attitude seems to be quite common in Arab countries, albeit they often deny this obvious fact. The beautiful Italian girl and I were largely eye-to-eye, and soon to be belly to belly; however, one remarkably disturbing event was about to delay that experience. Almost every *Hound* customer drank coffee, which then was only a dime, or it was free with the purchase of food, and it came with unlimited refills. The brew was served in bullet-proof white ceramic mugs. The walls of those coffee mugs were so thick and heavy, that had one of those coffee mugs been dropped from the top of *Empire State Building*, it would probably have gone clean through a car, the street, and a subway train below, without breaking.

The Hound's most entertaining feature was its astonishing nighttime black waitress, who was also the cook, and the epitome of sweetness and light. During the dark hours, the eatery was run by the locally renown Joyce, one very large and tremendously amiable woman, who wore a clean, but

permanently stained, short white uniform, with matching spattered white apron. Joyce's skin was a lovely brassy brown, but her generous lips were a light reddish brown, the reddishness may have been owing to her very passionate blood, pulsing through them. She wore her hair in two small buns above each ear, which made her head look too large.

The effervescent hostess, was an amateur psychologist, a part time priestly confessor, and an all around problem solver, working from ten in the evening, until six the next morning, all for half minimum wage, plus tips. Minimum wage was about \$1.60, then. You could say that she was a genuine lover, since she appeared to love everyone, unless they rebuked her, then she'd politely ignore them. If you were the kind of guy, who was into big beautiful black women, Joyce might likely have been your huckleberry. It wasn't difficult to sense, that just below periscope depth, sex was her preoccupations.

Everyone, except the ever abundant southern white racists, loved the vivacious Joyce. Whenever she addressed a gentleman, she'd seductively referred to him as, "Baby." As in, "You want mo grits, Baby?" Whenever she looked at a handsome man, she had an unconscious habit of lightly touching the tip of her

tongue to her upper lip, and lowering her eyelids. Joyce called every woman “mama,” and regardless of their size, a young woman was called, “little mama.” Of course, almost all women as well as most men were little compared to the big friendly waitress.

Joyce called older women, “Ma’am,” or she called them by their first name, preceded by Miss, as in “Miss Mabel.” While this may not have been grammatically correct, it was done out of earnest respect; besides; as with almost everything, through the centuries, grammar changes, whereas the concept of love and respect remain roughly the same. She called older men, “Baby,” the same as she did young men, this made old men feel like she found them appealing, which I think she actually did. Many older men like respect, and to be called, “Sir.” Still secretly, they usually enjoy when a younger woman calls them “Baby,” and Joyce realized this. Joyce’s voice was low, warm, and buttery rich, not rough and cutting. She loved to make people happy, and constantly searched for ways to pay compliments.

“Oh! Alice honey that light blue blouse of yours show-nuff sets off dem pretty baby blues ah yours... that show be your color, little mama.” Joyce might have said.

“Jack don’t you be worry’n about those extra few pounds. A fine sexy man like you, will always have to fight-off da women. Myself, I likes a big man, Baby. Ha, ha! *She’s not kidding!* So, you ain’t got nuttin to worry bout, stud?” She’d state with a wink.

“I show like that fine new car, you be driving, Bob. It’s hot and sexy, just like you, Baby. You deserve a car like that. But watch out for the police... they be given you a speed’n ticket, cuz they be jealous. Dem fancy cars attract the women and police like flies to honey, Baby!” Joyce counseled.

Moreover, Joyce usually remembered where the conversation had previously left off. She seemed to keep track of all the events in almost everyone’s life.

“Yo cousin ever pay you dat money, she be owing you, Mama? It’s been almost four months, now. You knows, you need to be strong about that money, and not let her get away with it. You too good ah person to let that happen to you. You deserve yo respect, Mama!” Joyce sagely advised.

“Little mama, your sista ever get her surgery? I been pray’n for her and last Sunday, I asked our congregation to pray to the Lord for her surgery. You’d be surprised how that pray’n do work. She be

too young to be have'n that kinda trouble. God bless yo sista! I know she'll be healthy in no time, you'll see." Joyce sympathetically encouraged.

"That dog still be pee'n on yo carpet, James? You can always just make him an outdoor dog. Put him in the back yard... make him a nice big doghouse. There's a whole bunch of scrap wood, in front of that house they're building on the back side of this block. That dog ah yours got plenty a fur, for when it gets cold. *How does she know about the dog's fur?* Besides, it don't get all that cold here in Mobile. We don't never get no snow. You know James, I hear they gots dogs in Alaska that sleeps down in the snow, at night."

Not only did Joyce show interest in the humanity of *The Hound*, but if you were a regular, when she'd deliver your order, there was usually something extra on the plate. In lieu of Joyce's benevolence, *The Hound* was likely losing a little of its' profits.

"I done put a coupla extra home-made buttery biscuits on yo plate, and they do be flaky. I knows you loves em, Baby. There's some fresh apple butter on de plate to go, too. Hmmm Hmmm Hmmm." She'd happily proclaim, setting the plate in front of the male customer.

Joyce loved food so much, that she would actually lick her lips, when delivering a plate of food; but then, sometimes it was difficult to decide whether the licking of her lips was owing to the food or to a sexual attraction for certain of the male customers. Often, when I'd be stoned on weed, I'd found myself thinking about big Joyce licking her lips.

"I could tell you be need'n a big slice of that apple pie to go with your coffee... no charge, Little Mama. I baked, and I really put my foot in it, if I do say so myself. If'n you want, I can put a big scoop a nilla ice cream right on top that pie? What you say, Miss Lori?"

"There be two extra eggs in that omelet, cuz you be look'n mighty hungry, especially after all that hard work you do, filling all them potholes for this cheap ass, low pay'n, city... keep'n those people from mess'n-up their cars. They don't pay you near nuff for that hot work, Baby. Minimum wage ain't hardly worth it, for that kinda smelly hot asphalt work. But at least, you gots ah job and that's a lot more than my last husband could'a said. If'n he was a good man like you, I'd never had to sweep him out the door. I got the broom outta the closet and that's all it took.

He was a superstitious man, and scared ah the broom... you know... going to jail, and all that.”

She'd usually give her head a little 'wobble-wobble,' and widen her eyes, whenever she'd say those friendly things. As mentioned, Joyce loved to laugh and made a point of trying to liven-up everyone's spirits. Her laughter wasn't haughty, but designed to be uplifting, with her eyes inviting others to join in. If a person was down in the dumps, Joyce applied all of her energies, toward cheering them up. The laugh also held the promise of a great singing voice, but I never actually heard her sing. She said that her singing was strictly for the Lord... gospel music.

“Don't you be worry'n, little Mama. It's all gonna be just fine; you'll see, soon ah nuff. And if it ain't okay...you come see me. I'll take care of you. But, if I can't, the good Lord show nuff can. We'll get through it together. Ya'll see, sweetie. Ya gotta pray, little Mama, and trust in the Lord. He'll never let you down.”

“Sorry, your dear mother done passed on, but you know she be in a much betta place. She's with the Great Lord above, now! God says, that death is some'n we all gots to go through. A good christian,

like your mama, is now happy as can be. Just thank the good Lord, she didn't suffer none! I know you be miss'n her, but time will get ya back to feeling betta. I know it's hard right now, but the Lord is taking care of her. Your mother be a whole lot better off than we is, Baby!"

"Don't you be fret'n about get'n fired. Lou? You didn't need that stupid job, no ways. Baby, I just know you be get'n a better job, soon. You know, John be hiring men for work'n on that new house, he be build'n down there on Gregory Street, across de street from dat ball-field, next to the armory. He'll be there early tomorrow morning, bout the time I get off, from here. Maybe, you oughta talk with him."

For a big woman, Joyce could move nimbly and gracefully around and between the tables, almost like a petite prima ballerina. At times, her overly-developed hips barely fit between the tables, and her generous figure seemed to defy gravity, almost appearing to float at times. The fat of her body was extremely firm, not lose or jiggly, and when unhurried, she displayed a pronounced saucy rhythm to her walk, and when there was a man of interest nearby, her voice inadvertently dropped half an octave, and her upper eyelids lowered to a sexually

wicked half mast. She made it known that she liked both white and black men, and never appeared to discriminate. In those days, about ninety-five percent of Mobile's inhabitants considered such interracial behavior horribly unacceptable, if not utterly disgraceful. In that respect, Joyce was indeed a fearless woman, outside her time. She seemed oblivious to racial issues, during a time when it was the equivalent of ignoring the tornado, which had just torn your home apart.

She could handle several food orders simultaneously; all the while, carrying on her uplifting conversation. She never used an order pad, and I never saw her make a mistake. Her only flaw was her desperate need to be loved; it was more than palpable, and I'm not just speaking of just her sexual need. Joyce's desperate need for love, made her an easy target for the more racist customers, yet she never openly criticized them for their various subtle, and not so subtle, cruelties. She clearly wanted everyone to love her, whence I suspected she made more than her share of innocent mistakes in the world of romance. She wasn't one of those gals, who considered sex as just something for fun; but most likely, she sported a sizable collection of experiential

scars.

That night in *The Hound*, besides myself and the Italian beauty, there were four others present: Joyce, one other young couple, and an extra large sulking Mobile cop. Uncharacteristically, Joyce didn't speak to him. The fact that Joyce was not speaking with the policeman was plainly incongruous, since I'd always seen Joyce actively chatting-up various members of law-enforcement, all of which were white, and most of which were racists, but Joyce never seemed to mind. In my subjective opinion, at least half of the racist cops didn't honestly think they were racist.

That night, Joyce just ignored that big cop, and just let him sip his coffee. The entire time the cop sat there, Joyce not only said absolutely nothing to him, but she even gave him a 'silent coffee refill.' Never before that evening, had I seen Joyce be anything but exceedingly talkative and warmly cordial; certainly, never giving anyone a cold-shoulder. *Perhaps, he's arrested one of her family members.* The silent cop just sat, with his back to everyone, sipping his coffee, and staring at the blank white wall, just four feet in front of him. Occasionally, he would throw an unfriendly side glance in my direction, with his upper lip pushing-up his nose, giving me the impression that

he didn't care for me, and maybe that he wanted me to leave the bus station, yet I couldn't imagine why. Joyce and I always hit it off, and my brief talk with her seemed to annoy the big cop. *He's probably a racist, and doesn't think whites should be friendly with blacks!* He clearly seemed irate, yet I'd done nothing to deserve his ire.

The small melodrama was a mystery. Joyce issued him a fair number of tiny quick glances, mixed in with the random pronounced glare. She also chewed on her lower lip, and angrily flared her nostrils, which was something, I'd never seen Joyce do. *She's obviously upset with him! He must have said something unkind to her.* Then she walked back to the grill, and for a brief period, she stood behind the long breakfast counter, hands on her ample hips. With her lips pulled off to one side, while she stared a hole through the back of the cop's large spherical white head, which wasn't half as wide as his neck. Luckily, the cop never turned around, so he didn't see Joyce's glaring at him. He plainly appeared tense and was somewhat ill-kept. His uniform was awfully wrinkled, with marked sweat stains, extending from his armpits halfway down his sides. *That guy looks stressed to the max!*

“Joyce is not saying anything to that cop. That’s so weird for her, because she’s usually friendly with everyone; cops and rednecks included. Something weird is going on.” I quietly whispered to my attractive date.

“Something must have happened between Joyce and that cop, before we got, here. He does look mean.” My date volunteered.

“Yeah...he sure doesn’t look too congenial to me. He probably has some girlfriend problems, and is taking it out on everybody. Some people get upset, and believe it’s okay to be rude to everyone.” I postulated.

Studying the cop, I noticed that his uniform cap was on the table, but his uniform coat was missing. *He must have left it in his cruiser.* The dark circles under his eyes attested to the fact that he hadn’t been to sleep for some time. *He looks crazy.* As mentioned, he was a massive man; only slightly fat, with a lot of heavy muscular beef packed just below the thin superficial lard. He was built like an *NLF* lineman, and radiated with a slow vexed burn, reminding me of a bomb with a slow burning fuse. The big man’s vibes were putting a slight damper on the romantic atmosphere, and even though the place was plainly

lack-luster, romance was definitely in the offing with that erotic Italian beauty.

Her large brown eyes seemed like warm liquid pools, and they made me want to dive-in and leave with her, but she'd ordered a refill, and put a shot from her flask in it, and then put two dollops in mine. Sadly, I've always been attracted to sexy female addicts. Luckily, the cop didn't appear to notice the liquor, but Joyce knowingly smiled and winked at me, behind my date's back. When my date went to the ladies room, Joyce walked by, jokingly wagging her index finger, commenting, "She's cute, but she's be make'n you wait! Just be patient, Baby, and don't be get'n too drunk, if'n you wants to get real lucky."

The policeman had been in *The Hound*, since before I'd arrived, and I'd been there for nearly an hour. He'd only gotten-up once to use the restroom and didn't look too friendly as he strutted by. As a rule, on-duty cops never sat for that length of time, but he wasn't off duty because, as mentioned, he was still in his uniform, and I'd seen his patrol car was parked out front, when my date and I entered *The Hound*. In those days, young cops in Mobile didn't get to take a patrol car home. For some reason, this

massive cop seemed to be hanging around, only to scowl at the wall, and sip on his coffee. *That guy is just ignoring his patrol duties.* That cop definitely had a burr under his saddle blanket. *Maybe, he's been fired, but then, he wouldn't still have that pistol on his hip.* The cop repeatedly flexed the long thick fingers of his left hand, and then he'd stir his coffee with his right hand, the plain metal spoon loudly scrapping the interior cylindrical wall of the thick ceramic mug, as if he'd added sugar or cream, when in fact, he hadn't. *Is he crazy?* His light blue eyes were contrasted by a blazing reddish orange buzz cut, and his snow white skin was amply sprinkled with both large and small light brown freckles of various sizes, ergo I figured he was likely of Irish ancestry. Absurdly, the motley freckled skin made me think of a giraffe. I'd never seen that particular cop before, and there was definitely something sinister about him.

Entrance to the bus station was made through a pair of extra heavy large glass doors, each a half inch thick, and each equipped with a vertical brushed aluminum handle. Talking with the stunning Italian woman, our backs were toward the two big glass doors, when there occurred a soft, but distinctive, vibratory 'thump.' It was an ill-placed sound. Briefly,

I imagined that perhaps a pelican or seagull had flown into the glass doors. That area of Mobile had a fair number of the big clumsy birds. The seabirds would frequently survey the dumpsters and trash receptacles, searching for scraps of food, and were renown for bombing the hoods, trunks, and roofs of cars, when defecating. So many wild animals have bastardized their innate behaviors, being forced to accommodate to the countless influences of humankind's massive territorial encroachment. Humans have often changed the environment into something that doesn't remotely resemble mother-nature, and animal behavior struggles to adapt.

After turning around in the booth, I saw that the mysterious 'thump' had been made by a woman's face and forehead, striking the outside of one of the glass doors, and she was slowly sliding down the smooth thick glass surface, leaving a thin blood streak on the glass as she slid down. A second later, she'd ended-up slumped-down onto her right hip, with the right side of her face still firmly pressed-up against the thick glass; the pressure of her face on the glass caused that area of her facial skin to blanch pale. Clearly, the woman was injured!

Hurriedly, I jumped-up from the booth, and ran

to the entrance, pushed open the adjacent glass door, to check on her. At the sound of the other door opening, her face swiveled up to look at me. Shockingly, I saw that the soft tissues around her eyes were so swollen, that she was gazing at me through only the thinnest of slits. In fact, the slits were so thin that I wondered if she could actually see-out through them, at all. A single thick drop of blood was dried to the corner of one of the eye slits, making me wonder if the eyeball was damaged. Blood was still flowing from her nose. *Somebody has pounded this poor women's face into a bloody mess!* Expecting her to say something, I looked at her mouth for words, and noticed that her lower lip was deeply split, and caked with a large amount of still tacky semi-congealed blood. A few strands of her long blond hair were stuck in the blood, but the woman was far beyond caring about esthetics. *Jesus! What a mess!* The woman hadn't just bumped into something, her face had obviously been savagely beaten. *Maybe, she's been raped.* She apparently then saw that a person was standing in front of her, and even though she didn't know me, she instantly freaked-out. The word "No!" shot passed her bloody lips to echo off the nearby buildings, and down along the deserted darkened street. At the same moment,

she turned and propelled herself backward, tumbling down the five polished red granite entrance steps, leading back down to the rough concrete sidewalk, below.

As she laid, with her back pressed to the dirty sidewalk, I shockingly saw that her left knee was unmistakably broken. Her lower left leg jutted out sideways at a near ninety degree angle. I didn't know if she'd broken it, during her fall back-down the stairs, or if she'd broken it, before she bumped into the glass. Disturbingly, the injured woman wasn't crying-out in pain. *She must be in shock! I hope it doesn't start to rain.* The woman seemed to have passed-out, but it was evident from the slight rapid rise and fall of her chest, she was still breathing. *She needs help, fast!*

The broken and battered woman just laid flat on her back, in a blood-stained, pink and white, flower-print dress. The dress-hem at one side of her waist was torn open, and the collar to the dress was ripped and partially detached. The knee was clearly broken, with the upper part of the leg pointed north, while her foot pointed west, down the sidewalk. She seemed like a broken china doll, which some child had grown tired of, and tossed out the car window,

onto the sidewalk. With her damaged face, her age was difficult to gauge... late twenties, thirties, maybe even early forties. The broken china doll wasn't completely unconscious. She revived slightly and began mumbling meaningless phrases, while her head would periodically role from side to side.

“Don't! Stop! Please, no!” She muttered not really seeing anything.

Her pitiful condition was almost too unbearable to gaze at. The old saying, that she was ‘once someone's child’ drifted through my head. She desperately needed medical attention, and most likely would require some psychiatric care, but only if she had insurance, or sufficient funds.

Remembering the cop, I leaned back inside the glass door, and called to him. Oddly, he was still studying the white wall and flexing his fingers of his big left hand, presumably unaware of the injured woman.

“I really need your help, sir! Would you please help me bring this poor lady inside? She needs help! We've got to help her, sir... please!” I desperately begged for the cop's assistance.

Nevertheless, his wide muscular back remained turned toward me, and he just kept staring at the

stark white wall in front of him. *Is he deaf? What's wrong with him?* He seemed to be in his own world, and completely detached from reality. The woman and the huge unresponsive cop made things seem off kilter. *Why isn't he responding? He had to have heard me.* Joyce quickly walked over to me, looked out at the woman on the sidewalk, then headed back to the grill.

My date was turned around in the booth, looking back at me for an explanation about the cop's unresponsiveness, but I only shrugged my shoulders. After a long delay, finally, the cop began to turn around, but slowly, then he only stared at me for a couple of long seconds, looking at me as if he hated me. Then, he grabbed his uniform hat from the table, and stood-up. Looking angry, he calmly strolled across the gray linoleum floor toward me, holding his cap in hand, brushing it against his right thigh as he strolled toward me. *Could this cop move any slower?*

The policeman looked like a fuming lumbering redheaded freckled face albino gorilla, with muscles barely fitting into his policeman's uniform. *Maybe he's just so accustomed to injury and violence, he's indifferent.* His shirt was way too small for him, and all the buttons pulled at the fabric. *The department*

probably doesn't issue them large enough for him. I stepped aside as he arrived at the door. He first looked down at the female victim, allowing an ugly sneer to slowly grace his features. The cop held that disparaging look, as he turned to then look directly at me; again appearing as if he hated me, and then his sneer got even worse. *What the hell is this guy thinking?* The cop then spoke, as if he was an actor, rotating his mean face around in a circular motion, and speaking loudly to everyone in the bus station. *Is he drunk? I don't smell alcohol.* The cop then proceeded with his comments, as if he were lecturing all of us in the ways of the street.

“Serves this stupid bitch right for being out at this hour, and work’n the God damn streets. God damn worthless hooker! Looks like she got her face beat-in, and her skinny leg got snapped. What the hell she expect, anyway? Done likely got herself raped, and maybe even pregnant! Then, she’ll probably be trying to tell her husband or boyfriend that the bastard baby is his, when it’s, who knows whose baby, cuz she’s done probably fucked half the men in Mobile. Women sure as hell lie about those kinda things. (This was before the days, where DNA testing could confirm parenthood.) All women lie...

a bunch ah big liars, they are! Ya can't trust none of em! And, you don't need to be tell'n me what to do, son. Ya hear me?" He loudly addressed me, then he emitted a chuckle. *He's dangerous!*

The laughter was out of place, and more than slightly eerie, and judging from his aggressive behavior, the fact that he was a policeman, and his massive physical prowess, he was clearly a man to be feared. I managed to give a simple feeble, reply.

"Yes sir." *What the fuck is up with this crazy cop?*

Needless-to-say, the cop's strange reaction had somewhat stunned me. Cops in redneck central (Mobile, Alabama), often had little to no respect for prostitutes, but even so, that monstrous guy was way over-the-top. Certainly, no pity was to be found in his response. *What is he thinking?* Maybe she was a prostitute, but in consideration of her plain conservative clothing, I didn't think she was a hooker, but after his claim that she was, I checked her out more closely.

Her torn clothes were ordinary and plainly tasteful, the lingering scent of her perfume wasn't tawdry. Moreover, I smelled no alcohol, and saw no track marks on her arms. Her shoes were barely

worn, just your basic tan leather flats, and then there was a small delicate gold cross, which was visibly laying on her overly exposed breastbone, because of her torn blouse. Her nails were moderately long, and perfectly done in a plain maroon, and not some garish color. While it was possible that the cop knew she was indeed a prostitute, and may have arrested her in the past, I seriously doubted it. But even if she were a street walker, why hate her so intensely, and why neglect her injuries?

The Jewish prostitute, Mary Magdalene traveled extensively with Jesus, and was even with him during his crucifixion and entombment. At the very least, she was his friend, but most of Jesus's history is unknown, so perhaps Ms. Magdalene was more than someone to talk with. Almost every cop in Mobile claimed to be a christian. Later in my worthless life, I'd investigate the gruesome torture and murder of a very young prostitute, and once again, I'd note that the cops hated her, even those cops, who'd never meant her.

Regardless of her profession, the semiconscious mumbling mangled woman, with her back pressed to the unforgiving sidewalk, desperately needed medical help, yet the huge cop was far too angry to

render assistance. He remained completely indifferent to her desperate plight. *Is this cop insane?*

On second thought, I was afraid to try to lift the severely injured woman back into *The Hound*, in lieu of the fact that she clearly had a broken knee, and for all I knew, she might also have had a spinal injury. For the time being, she was probably better off just laying on the sidewalk, and while it was threatening rain, it hadn't started; besides, I figured a little rain wouldn't actually hurt her, and might wash some of the blood off her face. *She needs an ambulance!*

Judging from all the caked-up blood, her swollen bloody eyes, the blood still exiting her nostrils, and cleaved markedly swollen lips, some manic had enjoyed pounding on her face. No doubt, the most disturbing feature was the left leg that pointed-out to the left and ninety degrees from the knee joint. While there are indeed some women, who look for ways to inspire a man to beat them, it was highly unlikely, that anyone would want what that pathetic woman had sustained. A little consensual rough sex is one thing, but what that woman had received was more like attempted murder. Such horrible beatings are frequently owing to sadistic men, who simply enjoy hurting people. Their aggression often produces their

sexual arousal; in other words, they have to beat on the woman to get an erection! Because of the great sex, which follows the violence, often the woman will repeatedly ‘forgive’ the man, as long as he ‘promises’ not to do it, again. Great sex means the woman releases lots of addictive oxytocin and beta-endorphin, and she becomes hooked on the sexual violence. For such men and women, their behavior is a product of ‘bad’ wiring. Some men have to hurt a woman to have sex, ergo beauty doesn’t do it for them. Feelings of cruelty and the images and sounds of the woman’s suffering send impulses from their brain, down to the muscles of the corpora cavernosum to relax, increasing blood flow to the penis, filling the spongy open spaces, and so the penis lengthens and expands, and the sadist thereby achieves his angry erection. It’s simply owing to the fact that the wrong parts of their limbic brain stimulate their *septal nucleus*. On the other end of the spectrum, some men must worship their woman to the point that they lack sufficient aggressive ego. But regardless of a person’s neurophysiology, a woman being viciously beaten is inexcusable, not to mention, criminal.

The sooner you realize that love is only the firing of certain neurons, the squirting of various neurotransmitters, and the release of a variety of hormones, the sooner you're free to enjoy it.

Bulls in the Field, by Adrian M.

Worley

For some reason, I felt that any second the cop would snap out of it, and use his car radio, to summon the pathetic lady an ambulance. The poor woman on the sidewalk was in need of timely medical help, but so far, none was coming. This made me recall the drowning victim on the beach, who'd received very little medical care once in the hospital, and he finally died.

"Please help her, sir!" Once more, I humbly beseeched.

"I just told you. Don't be tell'n me what to do. You hear me? Are you deaf? You dumb ass!" He bellowed, like a raging bull; his face having flushed a deep purplish red. *Is this massive idiot about to punch me?*

His reddish-orange hair and light skin contrast nicely. It seemed as if he'd lost his mind. Joyce had

come walking back over, and looked through the glass door, down at the broken china doll, who was still incoherently mumbling, and laying on the sidewalk.

“Oh, my Lord... poor child! Look at her broken leg... my God! Wonder what happened to her?” Joyce sympathetically asked, mock biting her own hand, right between her thumb and index finger.

Shaking her head, Joyce then instantly turned and headed back to the grill. In those days, there weren't cellphones, and to the best of my knowledge, there was only a single pay phone inside the bus station, but it had been broken for the last two weeks. Some teenage boy, who claimed the machine had stolen his dime, had broken the plastic receiver, by repeatedly beating it into the phone's chromed steel front. The adolescent was criminally notorious, so no one reported his vandalism. A few years later, the phone company would design their pay phones to withstand a direct hit from a high yield nuke. Once again, I foolishly begged the huge burly cop.

“Could you use your car radio and call an ambulance, please?” I asked, while preparing to duck a punch. *He's got to help; after all, he's a cop.*

“Young man, I just told you not to tell me what to do! You try to tell me what to do just one more time and you’re gonna be going to jail! We clear on that, you shit-for-brains? Keep your fuck’n mouth shut, or go to fucking jail, asshole! What’s it gonna be? You hear me?” He bellowed.

He’d stepped in so closed, that his crimson face was only three inches away from mine, and a not so fine spray of saliva had dampened my face. I didn’t smell any alcohol, just the sour metallic odor of coffee. Absurdly, I thought of a childhood saying. *‘Say it, don’t spray it.’*

Plainly, help was not coming from the enraged cop. Intense hatred radiated from his bright blue eyes, and his white freckled skin was now an iridescent purplish crimson. *Why is this cop so pissed?* The odd situation was completely unreasonable.

Once again leaving the grill, Joyce returned, stopping right behind the cop. She was holding her big greasy cooking spatula. There was certainly nothing unusual about her holding the spatula. However, what was out of the ordinary, was that she unexpectedly began bashing the cop, about the head and shoulders with the flat of it. The blows reigned-down hard and fast, and with each impact, the

spatula would come away making a wobbling metallic sound. *Has Joyce lost her mind! What the hell...?* The large greasy spatula wasn't doing any real damage, but surprise, was clearly registering on the massive cop's face. Moreover, Joyce's accompanying rhetoric was uncharacteristic, of her usual friendly self.

“Get your big worthless white honky ass outta here! We don't need no stupid cracker cop, like you! Besides, you ain't no good man! In fact William, you ain't no real man, ah tall! *Joyce knows his name!* Now get away from here! Get going, for I tells everyone what kinda man you be! Get you sorry ass outta here, you bastard! We don't need you, so go on, and get William! We'll manage on our own, thank you. Now, get!”

She's really lost it! That wonderful woman was behaving more than strangely. *What's up? Has the entire world gone crazy? First the cop... now Joyce!* She had completely lost control, all the while, the poor broken and beaten women continued to lay on the hard dirty Mobile sidewalk. Again, I glanced at my date, and she repeatedly called-out to me, “What's going on?” *I don't have a clue!*

I held up an index finger toward her, to say,

“Hold on.”

The world seemed to be in chaos: my worried date, the pathetic injured woman on the sidewalk, the big angry cop, and then even Joyce went ballistic on the cop. The other older couple just sat with their mouths open, not saying anything, doing their best not to get involved.

Surprisingly, the hostile cop, apparently named William, offered not the slightest resistance, to Joyce’s surprise onslaught with the big metal spatula, nor to her loud demeaning words. He seemed relatively unfazed, but thoughtful. Amazingly, he did nothing, and then suddenly the cop appeared to actually look relieved. He put on his police cap, walked down the five rose granite steps, right past the injured woman. Without a second glance, he crossed the street, climbed into his sun bleached police cruiser, and spun his right rear tire, as he zoomed away. Joyce spoke under her breath at the departing policeman.

“You can stay gone, you ignorant man!”

What the hell is happening, here? It was the only time I’d heard Joyce utter such disparaging remarks. Moreover, the cop’s behavior made no sense, at all. It

was the last and only time, I'd see that massive cop. To say the least, I was flabbergasted. Furthermore, it was the first and last time, I'd ever see a black person stand-up to, and actually beat-on, a white cop. It was like I'd entered the mystical land of the schizophrenic lotus eaters... nothing was making sense... antithesis of logic.

At the very least, in those days, a black person, who struck a police officer in Mobile, would get a lengthy prison sentence, preceded by a severe beating in one of the interrogation rooms of the police station. The interrogation rooms were bastions of brutality for far too many blacks. Grandpa had told me plenty about how badly blacks were treated by the cops in those small rooms. Frequently, the police would use their clubs, their fists, telephone books, black-jacks, or their shoes, as brutal interrogation tools, employed while the black person's hands were cuffed behind a metal chair, mouth gagged, and legs were tied to the front chair legs. Getting repeatedly hit in the head with a heavy phonebook left little external evidence of a beating, but the brain could be severely damaged, leaving the victim simple minded. Often, Grandpa had gone to interview a black defendant, only to find them

incoherent or stupefied. More than a few blacks had actually died in those rooms, where it would later be reported that they'd accidentally slipped and fallen down the stairs, while trying to escape.

In lieu of the fact, that the vast majority of the Mobile cops were members of the *KKK*, the outcome of said beatings was often more than mildly tragic. When a cop was wailing away on a restrained black, there was no dependable means by which to accurately gauge the damage they were inflicting. One thing for sure, there is a significant difference between the average cop's IQ, and the average doctor's, although there are a few brilliant cops. Those blacks, who failed to humble themselves and properly cower, before the power of the police, were typically referred to as, 'uppity niggers.' What I'd like to know is, who is the literary moron that came up with the word 'uppity.' Some folks say that the word first appeared around 1880 in the Uncle Remus stories, penned by Joel Chandler Harris.

Most of Mobile's whites had no idea, how many back room beatings went on in those interrogation rooms. There's a fair chance that some such beatings still goes on, today. Just ask Rodney King, who was beaten for almost 15 minutes by police with clubs

My feeling is that if Donald Trump defeats Hillary Clinton, racism in America will almost certainly escalate. White supremacists will be emboldened, sensing a fellow racist. If Trump gets elected, my bet is that he'll serve only one term, once people come to realize his true self. On the other hand, he may change for the good, once he's in the white house. Still, if Hillary gets elected she'll lay waste to minority's incentive to work by increasing welfare payments.

After her intense screaming and her welding of the harmless greasy spatula, Joyce was left breathing heavily, as she watched the cop, speed away. But even though her words had been angry, she looked a wee bit sad, and for a moment, I thought she was about to cry. Wrongly, I assumed that her sorrowful look was owing to the fact, that she might soon be headed for prison, for attacking the cop.

"I done called de ambulance, Joey. Don't be worrying about dat poor woman. I got's a telephone, over there in the corner, behind the counter, so the manager can call me, if he wants to check on this place. The ambulance will soon be com'n, Baby. You just go relax with yo pretty date, over there. The ambulance guys will take her to the hospital, so just

let her be on de sidewalk. It ain't too cold tonight, and it ain't rain's yet, so she'll probably be okay. That big cop show ain't no good! I don't know what be wrong with him, not helping that poor lady. Let me bring you something to eat, Baby... on the house... no charge. How bout a couple pieces a peach pie, for you two?"

"Please... thanks Joyce. I'd like that. How come that cop, you called William, didn't do anything to you, when you hit him and yelled at him? How'd you get away with that, Joyce? Are you crazy? What if he'd taken you to jail? Some cops may still come back to arrest you. You know what goes on in those back rooms at the police station! If you have any trouble, maybe my Grandpa can help you."

"Thank you, but that be my personal business, Joey. Just you let that be, for now. Hear me? Okay, Baby? I know William ain't dat stupid. He don't want me at that police station. Go sit down, and let me get your pie."

"Sure thing, Joyce. Thanks for getting the cop off my case. I thought he was going to lock me up, or drown me in sprayed spit. He was a real butthead." I vented, heading back to my worried date.

“That big man can show nuff get mad, but he ain’t all bad, just Ain’t grown-up, yet.” Joyce advised me.

Joyce then served everyone, including herself, a free slice of peach pie. She and her mother made the pies in their home’s kitchen, and the diner allowed her to sell them, to augment her salary. That kind of thing no longer exists... everything is now corporate! Also back then, the pies sold in restaurants and stores, contained more fruit, with less sugary jam, and with thinner flakier crusts. Now, America is the fattest nation on earth. Obesity and diabetes go hand-in-hand, keeping big Pharma in the green.

We live in a society where pizza gets to your house faster than the police.

Bill Murray

My date offered Joyce a sip from her hip flack. Joyce politely turned it down. After a couple of minutes, the ambulance and two attendants arrived and carried away the broken doll to the nearby hospital. She was still breathing. My date and I ate the free peach pie, thanked Joyce, and left. Inspired by the crazy adrenaline packed evening, my date and

I had an exceptionally good night. The mystery of Joyce's behavior toward the cop was never verbally explained.

Oddly enough, though Joyce had never mentioned anything about a boyfriend, roughly six months after the strange night with the angry cop, at *The Hound*, she gave birth to a gorgeous full-term baby girl. Post-delivery, Joyce was away from work for about a month. She was such a large woman, it was practically impossible to detect her pregnancy, until about one month prior to delivery, then the customers started speculating; still, no one was certain, and no one wanted to ask the very large black woman, if she was pregnant. After that crazy night with the cop, Joyce remained mentally stable, never seeming to suffer from the flood of hormones, which correspond to most pregnancies. Perhaps, the only clue that she was pregnant was that she moved a little more slowly on the job. The day of the blessed event, her water broke, while she was cooking on the grill.

“My water just broke! Can one of ya’ll give me a ride over to Baptist Hospital, and someone run the grill till the manager gets here?” She’d asked *The Hounds’* diners; all of whom volunteered to take her.

Birth is an opportunity to transcend. To rise above what we are accustomed to, reach deeper inside ourselves than we are familiar with, and to see not only what we are truly made of, but the strength we can access in and through birth.

Marcie Macari

After a few weeks, Joyce came back to *The Hound*, accompanied by her small antique wrinkly white-haired mother. The place was fairly packed that evening. Upon seeing her smiling petite ebony mother, I recall thinking that it was difficult to believe that the older woman had birthed big Joyce. Next, I noticed that Joyce was carrying a fluffy pink blanket, and wrapped inside was a very light skinned beautiful baby girl, with bluish green eyes, and reddish brown curly hair. She was a small baby, and unlike her mother she was small boned with delicate features. Her cute face had a fine dusting of light reddish brown freckles, from cheek to cheek and across her light skinned button nose. Joyce told me she'd named the baby, Willa, then things finally made complete sense, about that bizarre night with the big redheaded cop. Joyce had truly gotten the best of him, and I don't mean with her spatula.

Willa was a far prettier and exquisite baby, than I imagined a woman with Joyce's heavy features could have produced. *The tiny baby takes after its' dainty Grandma.* As time passed, and for all of its' good looks, I became absolutely certain the lovely infant was not going to grow-up, with as fine a heart as dear Joyce, because Joyce spoiled the little girl rotten. Virtually very dime, Joyce earned, went into raising and entertaining Willa. Nonetheless, the child would probably be okay, as long as she hadn't inherited her policeman father's crabby disposition. While both her parents were definitely large people, the baby developed into a petite child. Often, the child would be doing her homework at *The Hound*, and so those among us, who had a little education, would periodically help tutor the brilliant kid.

At first glance, I never would have paired the kindly black Joyce, with the angry monstrous white cop. The mate selection process... why certain people are sexually attracted to each other... is indeed a wondrous complicated phenomenon. And what we often laugh at, as being nothing short of fumbling foolishness, may actually be a subtle and favorable biochemical intricacy; better determining which DNA sequences should be commingled, within the

fertilized ovum, so as to ultimately, if not miraculously, determine the inherent blueprint of the offspring. This may explain why sometimes the best sexual pairing is often the most illogical, or less than what is socially acceptable, i.e., between people of: different races, diverse economic groups, different ages, warring families, conflicted religions, different interests, vastly different phenotype characteristics, different cognitive abilities, varying sexual preferences, etc.

The attractive tiny pink baby girl filled Joyce's big generous heart to the brim, with a marvelous joy. And so, with that unexpected mating match, Joyce had finally received the love, she'd so desperately been searching for. Her love for the child was a powerful love, whereas her bouts with romantic love had invariably failed her. For Joyce, the muscularly built, ill-tempered, redheaded policeman was likely nothing but a drunken late night limbic ritual. Nevertheless, the cop might have been the perfect mate.

Sometimes fate takes a hand, coach.

Spoken by the character, Carla, in the TV series,
Cheers